TUESDAY
December 26, 2023

BENGALURU
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GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood (SDEL) Department

Sri D. K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister

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- Bhumika S. Thagaduru

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- Nagaraj

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- Keerthana

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J BG-BGE

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KHARGE TO DHANKHAR

'Mass suspension of MPs premeditated'

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OUT OF FRANCE

Grounded plane leaves for Mumbai

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CHEM PLUTO

Initial probe indicates a drone attack: Navy

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Terror victims in J&K need closure

Truth, reconciliation panel is a suggestion worth pursuing

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FINAL FRONTIER

India looks for its first Test series win in SA

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3 senior officers taken off posts as Army probes civilian deaths

Brigade Commander, Commanding Officer and second-in-command 'attached' with a local unit pending inquiry; police are probing a murder case; Army chief Gen. Manoj Pande visited Poonch sector and was given an update on security situation

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Three officers, including the Brigadier in-charge in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, have been "attached" with a local unit pending inquiry into the deaths of three civilians detained by the Army reported on December 22.

"Attachment" means being removed from the post to ensure an impartial investigation.

The J&K Police have already registered a murder case against unidentified persons over the deaths. Amid the prevailing tensions, the Chief of the Army Staff, General Manoj Pande, visited the Poonch sector on Monday, and was given an update on the security situation.

Security screening: A vehicle being checked ahead of the visit of Army chief General Manoj Pande to Rajouri on Monday. ANI

The three officers have been "attached as per procedure", while an Army inquiry is under way, two sources independently confirmed. All three were attached to the Nagrota-based 16 Corps, another source said.

The officers are the Brigade Commander, the Commanding Officer and the second-in-command of the unit concerned, it has been learnt.

Search continues

Meanwhile, a search operation to nab those responsible for firing on the Army vehicles is still on.

Eight men from the tribal Gujjar Bakkarwal community were detained by the Army following an attack on two vehicles carrying troops around 3.45 p.m. on December 21 in the Poonch-Rajouri area, which resulted in the deaths of four soldiers. They have been identified as Naik Birendra Singh, Naik Karan Kumar, rifleman Chandan Kumar and rifleman Gautam Kumar.

The troops were heading to an operational area at Thanamandi in Rajouri where an encounter was on since the night of December 20.

A 29-second video that went viral on social media showed persons, believed to be Army personnel, stripping three men and sprinkling chilli powder on them.

The J&K Police registered a first information report at the Surankote police station on Sunday after the three were found dead with multiple injuries.

On the Army chief's visit, the Army said on social media platform X, "Chief of Army Staff interacted with commanders on ground, exhorted them to conduct operations in the most professional manner and remain resolute and steadfast against all challenges."

Earlier, a defence spokesman in Jammu said the Army chief reached Jammu in the afternoon and immediately left for the Rajouri-Poonch sector to review the operational preparedness and the prevailing security situation.

(With PTI inputs)

WHAT THE FIR SAYS
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Karnataka reports 34 JN.1 cases, including three deaths

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Over a fortnight after the first JN.1 case was detected in Kerala on December 8, as many as 34 cases, including three patients who died in the last week, have been found to be infected with the new sub-variant of Omicron. Bengaluru accounts for 20 of the cases.

Following genome sequencing of 192 samples at the National Institute of Virology, Pune, and NCBS in Bengaluru, the presence of the new variant has been confirmed in 34 cases. Of the samples tested, results of 60 samples are available as of date.

"Results of the remaining are likely by Wednesday," Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said.

The samples of the three COVID-19 patients who died between December 15 and December 17 – male patients aged 76, 64, and 44 years – from Bengaluru and Ramanagara were found to be positive for JN.1. They also had several other comorbidities.

Bengaluru epicentre

Bengaluru accounted for the highest among those infected by the new variant, accounting for 20 of the 34 cases.

While four cases are from Mysuru, three are from Mandya, and one case each has been detected from Ramanagara, Bengaluru Rural, Kodagu, and Chamarajanagar, the Minister said.

On Monday, 125 new cases were reported, taking the total number of active cases to 436. Of the 125 cases, over 75% are from Bengaluru. The city now has 360 active cases.

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NEARBY

Govt. to go slow on hijab issue

BENGALURU
As the Congress high command is wary of the electoral implications of the Karnataka government's proposal to revoke the hijab ban in classrooms, the Central leaders have apparently suggested to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to go slow on controversial issues till 2024 general elections. » Page 4

One dead, 135 in hospital due to 'food poisoning'

BENGALURU
One person died and 135 have been hospitalised since Sunday after suspected food poisoning at Hoskote in Karnataka. The Health Department is now investigating the source of food poisoning. » Page 3

China offers consular aid to arrested Vivo staff

Press Trust of India
BEIJING

China on Monday said it would provide consular protection and assistance to the employees of the smartphone maker Vivo who were arrested in India, and expressed its firm backing to Chinese businesses in protecting their lawful rights and interests.

The Enforcement Directorate last week arrested three Vivo-India staff in connection with a money laundering investigation.

Asked for her reaction to the arrests, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told pressmen here on Monday that China was closely following the issue.

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Jaishankar arrives in Russia on 5-day visit

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Monday began his five-day visit to Moscow and St. Petersburg, during which he will hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Trade Minister Denis Manturov.

Mr. Jaishankar's visit is expected to see discussions on a number of thorny bilateral issues.

The visit is also significant as it comes in lieu of the annual summit due to be held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin, an unbroken tradition from the year 2000 until 2021, which the two sides have now skipped for the second year in a row, ostensibly due to the Ukraine conflict.

However, Mr. Putin and Mr. Modi have made several trips abroad during the year to other countries, making the omission of the annual summit significant.

Ahead of the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs said that Mr. Jaishankar would hold discussions on all bilateral, multilateral and international issues and also focus on cultural and people-to-people ties.

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Minister triggers a row by saying farmers wish for drought as loans will be waived

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

Minister for Textiles Shivanand Patil waded into a controversy by saying that farmers keep wishing for repeated droughts as they can avail themselves of loan waiver benefits. The statement drew strong reaction from farmers' organisations and the Opposition on Monday.

The Minister was speaking at the foundation day celebrations of the Suttatti Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society, near Chikkodi in Belagavi district, on Sunday.

At the event, he said: "Waters of the Krishna are freely available for irrigation and power supply for irrigation pumpsets is free too. Owing to drought, the Chief Minister has distributed seeds and fertilizers free of cost. Now, farmers wish for repeated droughts so that they can get their loans waived. But that is not right. We should not think in that manner. Because climatic conditions are such that even if you do not wish for it, there will be a drought once every three or four years and the government helps farmers during a crisis."

Minister for Textiles speaking at a programme near Chikkodi in Belagavi district on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Minister further said that loan waiver had been offered by successive Chief Ministers such as Siddaramaiah, H.D. Kumaraswamy, and B.S. Yediyurappa.

"This year, owing to drought, Mr. Siddaramaiah has offered to waive interest on medium-term loans. But we should understand that the government can help farmers only during a crisis and not at all times. No government can be of any help, in fact. If we all understand this and develop a vision for the future, it will be good for everyone," he said. "Times will change and new technologies and markets will help farmers," he added.

Mr. Patil said that the Union government had kept most food prices under check as it did not want food inflation to rise before Lok Sabha polls.

If prices of onion, sugar, copra and other commodities are not rising it is because they are all being controlled by the Union government. This is hurting farmers, as they are unable to get remunerative prices," the Minister said.

"Sugar is selling for ₹37-₹38 a kg. But in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is being sold for ₹60. Once the Lok Sabha polls are over, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will loosen the strings and sugar will hit ₹60 a kg," Mr. Patil claimed.

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» PAGE 3

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Esha Singh — a super special shooter with class and consistency

She has been phenomenal ever since she broke into the national scene, winning the women's, juniors and youth gold medals in air pistol in the National shooting championship in Thiruvananthapuram in 2018, all at the age of 13

PTI & SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kamesh Srinivasan

Indian shooting flourishes with talent. There are thousands of young shooters training around the country, any one of whom can spring to the forefront at the national and international level in very quick time, as we have seen so often in recent years.

The challenge of such an overwhelming fountain of talent is that it is not easy for anyone to stay in the national team and deliver international medals regularly. The dynamics of Indian shooting keeps churning out fresh talent, pushing aside the best of shooters.

From that perspective, Esha Singh has been phenomenal ever since she broke into the national scene with a bang, winning the women's, juniors and youth gold medals in air pistol in the National shooting championship in Thiruvananthapuram in 2018. She did that when she was only 13 years of age.

Beating the likes of Manu Bhaker, Shweta Singh, Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Heena Sidhu and Shri Nivetha was some achievement for a young prodigy in only her second national championship. She won three back to back finals to crown herself as the women's, junior and youth national champion. It was an achievement unmatched for one so young.

The charming girl from Telangana, guided diligently by her father Sachin Singh, a rally driver, who has put his sporting career in the back seat to tune Esha to world standards, has so far won 40 international medals. The numbers may be intimidating, achieved by an 18-year-old girl, but it is not about quantity, the quality is breathtaking.

Esha is the current mixed world champion in air pistol with Sarabjot Singh. No Indian pair had done it in the World Championship, even though Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary had swept everything at one stage.

In seventh heaven

Esha is the junior world champion in the 25-metre sports pistol that she won last year in Cairo, Egypt. In fact, she has seven medals from World Championships and four of them gold.

However, in the Indian context, it is the performance in the Asian Games that registers in the collective national conscience.

Esha rose to the challenge brilliantly in the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, winning four medals, a gold and three silver, that included two individual medals in air pistol and sports pistol.

It has to be recalled that there had only been three individual medals won by Indian women in the pistol events in the history of Asian Games till the last edition in Palembang in 2018. Rahi Sarnobat had won the sports pistol gold in 2018, while Shweta Chaudhary (2014) and Heena Sidhu (2018) had won the bronze in air pistol.

Esha was indeed exceptional in her execution. No wonder she was chosen for the Arjuna award this year, as she stood out amidst the overwhelming fountain of Indian talent.

"I am very happy with my performance in the Asian Games. I trained hard to achieve the goal. I had sleepless nights before the Games, which was normal as there was immense pressure. Overall, it was great to compete", said Esha, quite composed and calm, which is her admirable trait.

"The good thing about Esha is that she performs great under pressure. She is at the peak of her performance when standing next to some of the best in the sport. It is an inherent trait in her, and that is something she has developed herself", said Sachin, father of Esha.

Such a staggering level of achievements have come about in a short span in a sport which was not planned for Esha.

How it happened

"Nothing was planned for Esha to pick up shooting. A friend of mine had called me for a biriyani meeting at one of the Gachibowli ranges in Hyderabad. Esha accompanied me. My friends were shooting and the sound captured her imagination and attracted her to the sport", recalled Sachin.

The father gratefully recalls the weekly lessons in pistol shooting given by coach Sunder Ghate that laid a strong foundation for Esha's shooting career.

Pawan Singh, the co-founder of Gun for Glory Academy in partnership with Gagan Narang, has been of tremendous help in grooming the young talent to world standards.

"Pawan helped us a lot, without charging a single paisa from us during those days. He gave the guidance and all possible support", said Sachin, a constant presence in Esha's shooting journey across the country and around the world.

"Esha's shooting started when she was nine years old. A lot of academies in those days did not want to take a shooter below 12 years. There were good scientific reasons behind that. I had to travel with her, especially as she is a girl. I didn't want to leave her alone at a very young age. There is no disturbance for her. She does everything on her own. We maintain the distance. Sometimes when we are in the stands, she looks at us for comfort or reassurance. There are also times when she tells me to stay out of the range when she competes. There are ups and downs, there are positives and negatives. It all depends on the psychology of the child", said Sachin, who retains admirable equanimity despite the varying situations.

Esha is regularly guided by coach Ved Prakash and by Ronak Pandit when she is part of the national team.

The early success in the Khelo India Games ensured "great support" from the Khelo India project for Esha. Thereafter, she has been part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) that ensures comprehensive support in pursuit of excellence. The State and Central governments have been backing her strongly so that the young girl could just focus on her shooting and keep getting better in the sport.

She also won the Pradhan Mantri Bharat puraskar, that served as a ''great encouragement" in her shooting career.

"I am very happy and satisfied with the results so far. Of course, there are ups and downs in any sporting career. You cannot win, unless you lose. That is how I look at it", said Esha, giving an insight into her mindset and her approach in sport.

Enjoy the winning experience, without enduring the fear of losing. That is Esha's mantra for success and happiness.

It is the Olympics that beckons Esha now. There are Olympic quotas to be won in the pistol events. Esha got only two chances so far, as she was busy competing among the juniors in the first Olympic quota event in the current cycle, the World Championships last year in Cairo.

Esha did not make the finals in air pistol or sports pistol in the World Championship this year in Baku, Azerbaijan. She did not get a chance to shoot air pistol in the Asian Championship in Changwon, Korea, this year. In sports pistol, she missed making the final after shooting 579, when Manu Bhaker won the Olympic quota after topping qualification with 591.

"I am confident this time of winning the Olympic quota. I will continue to work hard, and the focus is to give your best on that day", she said.

For sure, challenges bring out the best in Esha. For, she thrives under pressure. There will be no dearth of it in the coming months. Look out for Esha Singh shining bright, on the biggest stage for sports.

THE GIST

- Esha shot into the limelight when she outshone Manu, Shweta, Yashaswini, Heena and Shri Nivetha in only her second National event
- She won a gold and three silver, including two individual medals in air pistol and sports pistol, at the Hangzhou Asian Games

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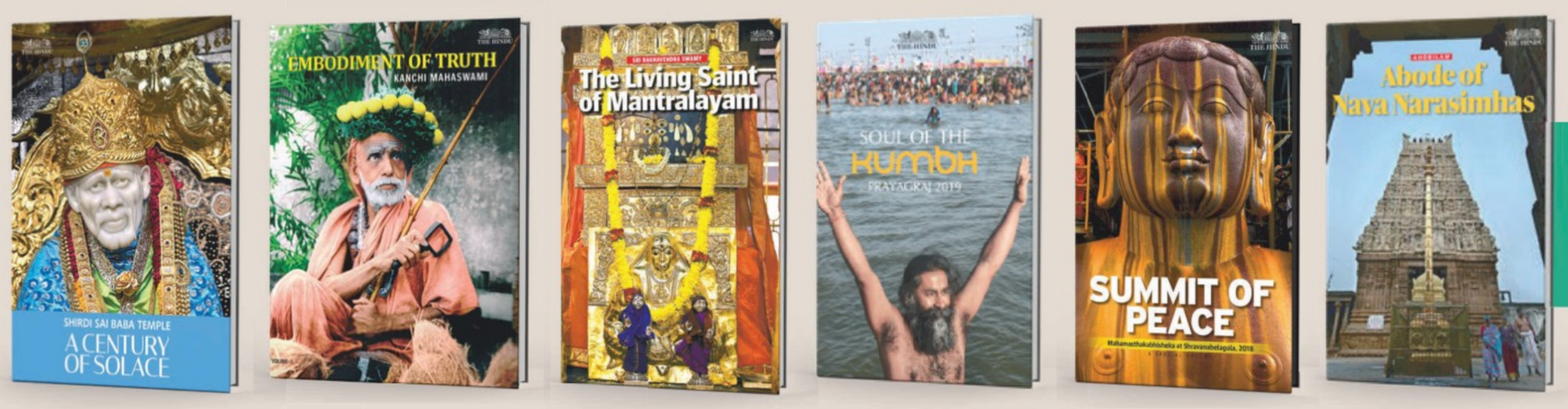

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Schools complain of lack of staff and funds to clean toilets

Teachers' body is demanding that maintenance of school toilets be entrusted to local bodies

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

Incidents of students being forced to clean school toilets were reported recently. One case was reported from Malur in Kolar district and another from Andrahalli in Bengaluru city. FILE PHOTO

Shortage of funds and non-availability of cleaning staff has resulted in children being forced to clean toilets in many government schools across Karnataka, allege stakeholders. As a result, toilets in most schools are being cleaned only two or three times in a month.

The issue is back in focus following incidents of students being forced to clean school toilets. One case was reported from Malur in Kolar district and another from Andrahalli in Bengaluru city.

This is despite the Department of School Education and Literacy revising the sum for maintenance of government schools to a maximum of ₹45,000 per annum in September 2023, depending on the number of students.

Earlier, the department provided a measly ₹2,500 to ₹5,000 per annum, irrespective of the number of students. This fund is to be used for drinking water, cleaning of toilets, maintenance of libraries, playgrounds, laboratories, and other activities. Recently, the government announced that government schools would not have to pay for electricity.

Stating that this sum is inadequate, school authorities want either the sum to be hiked, or want the work to be entrusted to local bodies.

Student strength

As per the revised allocation, a government school that has up to 50 students is eligible for ₹20,000 per annum for maintenance. A school that has up to 100 students is eligible for ₹28,000 per annum, up to 500 students ₹33,000, and above 501 students, the sum is ₹45,000 per annum.

But many government schools authorities argue that this sum is inadequate.

The headmaster of a Government Higher Primary School in Ramanagara district told *The Hindu*, "We have about 270 students in our school every year. Recently, the government released ₹9,000. We don't even know exactly how much overall fund has been allocated to our school and whether we will get another instalment of money."

Many schools complain that even when there is money, workers are not available. .

The Karnataka State Primary School Teachers' Association (KSPSTA) has demanded that the State government entrust school maintenance, including cleaning of toilets and classrooms, to local bodies.

Chandrashekara Nuggali, general secretary of KSPSTA, said, "All local bodies have appointed cleaning labourers within their limits.

Therefore, we requested the State Government to entrust the cleaning of school toilets and classrooms to local bodies, including BBMP, corporations, town municipalities and gram panchayats at the rural level. We will submit a memorandum to the Chief Minister soon."

Umesh G. Gangavadi, State president of the Schools Development and Monitoring Committee, said, "The toilets are not cleaned even once a week in the majority of schools. It affects the health of students, particularly girls. So, we requested private companies, donors and alumni to donate for school maintenance."

HC quashes trespass case against man for entering apartment to meet minor daughter

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka quashed a criminal case of alleged trespass registered against a man who entered an apartment complex posing as a garbage collector to meet his eight-year-old daughter after his divorced wife denied permission to enter the complex despite him having weekly visitation rights granted by a court.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Anupam, who had questioned the legality of the case registered against him by the Bengaluru city police based on his former wife's complaint.

Mutual agreement

The petitioner and his wife terminated their marriage with mutual consent in 2020 at a family court in Delhi.

As per mutual agreement, the court had granted the child's custody to the mother and the petitioner was granted a permanent right to visit daughter every Saturday between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. at the mother's house or at neutral places like an activity zone, mall, etc.

Petitioner's former wife had sent him an email on August 19, 2022 (Friday), postponing visitation scheduled for August 20 (Saturday) to August 27.

Though the petitioner took note of the mail, he did not accept it and went to meet his daughter in the apartment.

Complaint lodged

He had gained entry into the apartment complex in the guise of parking the vehicle, but when the security personnel came in search of him, he got into the tailgate of the apartment's garbage vehicle.

He then entered the apartment building posing as garbage collector and attempted to meet his daughter in the flat, and later left the apartment.

His former wife lodged a complaint against him on September 7, 2022, alleging that he trespassed into the apartment when she was not in the apartment. Stating that her daughter went into trauma on suddenly seeing the petitioner and the girl had locked herself inside bathroom for two hours, it was complained that the petitioner had intimidated the daughter.

'Anxiety of father'

However, the High Court found that the complaint lacks ingredients for the offences of either trespass or criminal intimidation as the petitioner had a valid visitation right to meet his daughter.

Also, the High Court described the petitioner's conduct as the "anxiety of a father" to meet the daughter as he would have to wait for another week to see the daughter and this was dubbed as a criminal act by the former wife. The court also took note of the petitioner's claim that his former wife had, on many occasions earlier too breached his visitation right.

BBMP, Fire and Emergency Services squabble over who should shut down errant rooftop establishments

Shreyas H.S.
Surabhi Gorebal
BENGALURU

Following a fire at a rooftop hookah bar on October 19, the State government ordered an audit of all rooftop bars and the closure of those without clearance. The audit identified 243 such rooftop bars and restaurants. However, none of them have been closed.

Instead, they continue to thrive even as the Fire and Emergency Services and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) are engaged in a quarrell over who should shut them.

List sent to BBMP

Following orders by Home Minister G. Parameshwara in the aftermath of the fire accident at Mudpipe Cafe in Koramangala, which forced a staffer to jump to safety from the roof, the Fire and Emergency Services conducted the audit of all rooftop bars and restaurants in Bengaluru on fire safety and identified 243 of them for closure. They sent the list to the BBMP, asking them to shut down their operations.

A senior fire official said the department doesn't have powers to shut down establishments as they operate under the BBMP and said hence the list was handed over to the civic body.

An impasse

Now, the BBMP has said it has no power to act against restaurants that have not obtained No-Objection Certificate (NoC) from the Fire and Emergency Services, and it has asked the Fire Department to close these rooftop establishments.

"The BBMP cannot act on its own as this matter comes under the jurisdiction of the Fire and Emergency Services, which is the competent authority to issue closure orders over violations of fire safety norms. I have also spoken to the Director-General of Police, Fire and Emergency Services over the same. Unless competent authorities issue orders, we are unable to initiate action," said Tushar Giri Nath, Chief Civic Commissioner, Bengaluru.

A senior fire official continued to argue that they did not have powers to close these establishments as the BBMP was the licensing authority and they had to shut them, even as the BBMP officials argue that only the Fire and Emergency Services can shut an establishment over violations of fire safety norms. This back and forth has led to the present impasse, allowing rooftop establishments with lax fire safety measures to continue to thrive in the meanwhile.

100 new electric buses leased to BMTC to be flagged off today

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

One hundred new electric buses leased to Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation by Tata Motors will be flagged off on Tuesday near the grand steps of Vidhana Soudha by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

This is the first set of buses to be inducted into the BMTC fleet out of the 921 non-AC electric buses that Tata Motors is expected to provide BMTC after winning an order in August 2022.

Union to boycott

Meanwhile, the KSRTC Staff and Workers Federation has decided to boycott the flag-off function owing to their differences with Sathyavathi G., the Managing Director of BMTC.

In a letter addressed to the Managing Director, the federation alleged that Ms. Sathyavathi never discussed the problems of the employees with the labour unions.

The members have also alleged that she used "bad language" to address many BMTC officials, including depot managers.

They also demanded that the State government replace Ms. Sathyavathi with another officer to improve BMTC's employee relations. Ms. Satyavathi said she was not aware of the letter and all the unions were invited for the event as a practice.

Gym trainer falls to death

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A gym trainer fell to his death from the balcony of his flat in an apartment on Haralur-Sarjapura Road on Sunday night. The deceased, identified as Ganesh Pandu, in his late thirties, was depressed and mostly kept to himself, preliminary inquiries revealed.

From a height

He fell to his death from the fifth-floor balcony around 11.45 p.m. on Sunday. Parappana Agrahara Police have booked a case of unnatural death and are probing whether the fall was accidental or not.

Three killed in road accidents

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Three people, including an auto driver, were killed in three accidents in the city in the wee hours of Monday.

An auto driver, Chandraprakash, 50, was allegedly speeding and lost control of his vehicle, rammed it into the road median and toppled onto the opposite lane in Ulsoor on Monday. Though he was immediately rushed to a hospital, he succumbed an hour later.

In another accident, a pedestrian trying to cross the road was run over by a speeding Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation Rajahamsa bus near Majestic . The pedestrian was killed on the spot.

A diploma student was killed in a scooter accident on International Airport Road Monday morning. The deceased has been identified as Haridev, 23, hailing from Kerala. He was riding the scooter with his friend riding pillion. Haridev succumbed later in the day at a private hospital, while his friend continues to be critical.

Woman killed in gas geyser leakage

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In an incident that has come to light late, a 23-year-old woman died after inhaling carbon monoxide emitted from a gas geyser at Basaveshwara Nagar on December 20. The deceased has been identified as Rajeshwari. As the woman did not come out of the bathroom for long, the family members started to knock on the door. When she did not respond, they broke open the door to find her lying unconscious.

The family rushed her to the hospital, where doctors declared her dead upon arrival. The Kamakshipalya police have registered a case of unnatural death.

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A Newspaper exclusively curated for School Students

67TH NATIONAL TENNIS TOURNAMENT

The 67th National Tennis Tournament, Under-17 Boys' held at Dravid Padukone Centre for Sports Excellence Academy. It was witnessed by the Chairman of the CISCE, Dr.G Immanuel and Srinath Prahlad, International tennis player. This event was organised by the CISCE and was hosted by Ryan International School, Yelahanka, Bengaluru. Chief guest at the closing ceremony was Yashaswini Panwar. The students of Ryan International School, Yelahanka performed beautiful dance representing the different cultures and parts of Karnataka. The awards were distributed by the chief guest, Ms. Yashaswini Panwar and the Chairman of CISCE, Dr. G Immanuel.

ROLLER-SKATING CHAMP

Athif, a student of grade 8 at The Cambridge International School (TCIS), clinched gold medal in the roller freestyle event at the 61st National Roller Skating Championship under the age category between 11 – 14 years. The competition, held in Chandigarh and Chennai, organised by the Roller-Skating Federation of India, saw Athif compete against over 4,000 skaters representing 27 States and Union territories.

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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE & JMFC AT HOSAKOTE
O.S.NO.283 /2023

PLAINTIFFS : Sri. V. Sathya Narayana, S/o Sri. M. Venkatesh, aged about 38 years, R/at No.45, 1st Cross, B.M.Krishna Murthy Nagar, New Byappanahalli, Indiarangar Post, Bangalore -38 **V/s**

DEFENDANTS :
SMT. B. Anasuyamma & Others

NOTICE TO THE DEFENDANTS

1. Smt. B.Anasuyamma, aged about 75 years, W/o Late Sri. S. Anjaneyalu
2. Smt. V. Adishwari, aged about 48 years, W/o Late Sri. A.Prashanth,
3. Kumari P. Madhuri, aged about 15 years, D/o Late Sri. A.Prashanth, Since minor she is represented by her mother Smt. V.Adishwari (Defendant No.2) as the Natural Guardian
4. Smt. Swathi Chaterji, aged about 45 years, D/o Late Sri. S.Anjaneyalu,
All are R/at : No.62, 2nd floor, South end Road, near Nagasandra Circle, Basavanagudi, Bangalore - 560004.

Take notice that the Plaintiff above named has instituted the above suit against yourselves in the court of the Hon'ble senior civil judge & JMFC at Hosakote for a Judgement and Decree against youselves for specific performance of the agreement of sales dated **23.09.2015** and the Registered sale agreement dated **14-10-2015,** registered as Document No.5873 /2015-16, Registered in the office of the Sub-Registered as Document **No.5873 /2015-16**, Registered in the Office of the Sub Registrar, Hoskote in respect of the suit schedule property in favor of the plaintiff and for such other reliefs.

The above case is now posted for your appearance **on 20-02-2024.**

You are therefore hereby directed to appear before the said court at **11.00 A.M.** on the above said date either in person or through an advocate or duly authorised agent in support of your defense, failing which, the above suit would be decided ex-parte and the matter will be proceeded in accordance with law.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the Dry Land bearing **Sy.No.75/2 New Sy No.75/5,** situated at Vagata Agrahara Village, Jadigenahalli Hobli, Hoskote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District Measuring an extent of 1 Acre 3 1/2 guntas, and bounded on the :- **East by :** L N Nalini Rani Property bearing New Sy No.75/4, **West by :** Property bearing Sy No.75/1, **North by :** Government Road, **South by:** T.Muniyappa Land.

Given under my hand and seal of the court this **12-12-2023 at Hoskote**

By order of the Court, Sheristedhar
Principle Senior Civil Judge and JMFC at Hoskote

VELLANKI RAVI,
Advocates & Associates,
No.321, 1st Floor, C.M.H.Road, Indiranagar, Bangalore - 560038.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The original General Power of Attorney dated January 7, 2003 executed by **Ms. Nidhi Jhunjhunwala,** daughter of Mr. Sajjan Kumar Jhunjhunwala in favour of **Mrs. Asha Devi Jhunjhunwala,** wife of Mr. Sajjan Kumar Jhunjhunwala pertaining to immovable property bearing No. 1189, Municipal No. 1189, PID No. 74-1-1189 comprising of site measuring East to West 74.15 Feet and North to South 60.70 Feet, totally measuring 4500 Square Feet together with a house thereon comprising of ground floor and two upper floors totally measuring 5050 Square Feet, situated in 4th Cross, 13th Main, HAL II Stage, Indiranagar, Bengaluru – 560 038 (the "Property") is lost. The loss of the said General Power of Attorney dated January 7, 2003 is the subject matter of a complaint before the Bengaluru City Police. Any person/s in possession of the documents should forthwith return the same to the undersigned.

Any person who may have come in possession of the aforesaid original General Power of Attorney dated January 7, 2003 is requested to hand over the same to us or to our client. Any person in wrongful possession of the said document will be prosecuted at their risk as to the costs and consequences therefor.

Sd/-
Asha Devi Jhunjhunwala

Place : Bengaluru
Date : 25-12-2023

IN THE COURT OF THE PRINCIPAL CIVIL JUDGE (JR.DN.) AT BANGALORE RURAL DISTRICT, BANGALORE
Misc. petition No.39/2023
A/o O.S.No.1355 /2008

SRI. M. KARTHICK RAJAN,
S/o Sri. C.Marisamy, aged about 42 years, R/at No.448, 22nd Street, Mahadevan Street, G.K.M.Colony, Chennai -600082,
Now Camped at Bangalore. **...Petitioner V/s**

1. Sri. N.Nagarajan, S/o Late Sri. Chinnappa, aged about 80 years, R/at No.500/B, 1st 'C' Cross, 3rd Main Road, Mathikere Post, Bangalore - 560054 and others **...Respondents**

NOTICE TO THE RESPONDENT Nos. 2 & 3

2. Sri. M.Narasimhalu, S/o Late Sri. Penchaiah, aged about 67 years, R/at No.15, 6th Main Road, 13th Cross, MSR Nagar, Mathikere Post, Bangalore - 560054.
3. Sri. M.Sridhar, S/o Late Sri. M.Musalaiah, aged about 49 years, R/at No.442, 2nd Floor, 1st B Main Road, 6th Cross, Balajinagar, Laggere, Bangalore - 560050.

Take notice that the Petitioner above named has instituted the above petition against yourselves seeking for setting aside the Ex-parte Judgement and Decree dated 10.06.2011 passed in O.S.No.1355 /2008 on the file of the Prl.Civil Judge (Jr.Dn) at Bangalore Rural District, Bangalore and to restore the said suit and grant an opportunity to contest the said case on merits and for such other reliefs in respect of the suit schedule property.

The above case is now posted for your appearance **on 25-01-2024.** Therefore, you are hereby directed to appear before the said court at **11.00 A.M.** on the above said date either in person or through an advocate or duly authorised agent in support of your defense, failing which, the above petition will be heard and decided in your absence and the matter will be proceeded in accordance with law.

PETITION SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the property bearing old Khatha No.154, Situated at 3rd Block, Gunjur Village, Varthur Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, and now failing within the folds of Bruhath Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, measuring East to West 50 feet and north to south 30 feet in all measuring 1500 square feet and bounded on the :- **East by :** Site No.122, **West by :** Road, **North by :** Site No.116, **South by :** Site No.118.

Given under my hand and seal of the court this **14th day of December 2023.**

By order of the Court, Sheristedhar
PRL Civil Judge, (JR.Division)
at Bangalore Rural Dist, Bangalore

VELLANKI RAVI, Advocates & Associates, No.321, 1st Floor, C.M.H.Road, Indiranagar, Bangalore - 560038.

Looking for intelligent alien life is hard not just for space's size

While it's been more than six decades since humans began listening for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence, 'Great Silence' of the universe remains unbroken; it could mean there is no intelligent life beyond earth — or that scientistsare missing what an intelligence might be broadcasting

Qudsia Gani

The great beyond: A colourised view of the night sky from the Spiral Jetty sculpture, Utah. FILE PHOTO/UNSPLASH

Some scientific adventures are as fascinating for the casual observer as they are for an engaged specialist. One such is the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI), driven by the premise that if there is life on another planet (especially in the form of intelligent beings), then it could have reached a level of technological advancement equal to ours or perhaps greater. And just as we have tried to find such life out there, these alien beings may be looking for us as well.

Across the vast distances of the cosmos, electromagnetic-wave signals are our best bet to identify ourselves and others. They range from radio signals concentrated in a narrow frequency range to pulsating wideband signals.

Researchers also need to have the proper means and techniques to differentiate naturally occurring waves, like radio noise from the magnetosphere of Jupiter or the environs of stars, from those transmitted from more interesting sources. Waves from space are also distorted en route to earth and whatever information they carry may not survive the journey intact.

Listening to neutrinos

This is why scientists have also proposed looking for neutrino signals. Neutrinos are subatomic particles. After photons, the particles of light, they are the most abundant particles in the universe.

They also interact very weakly with matter, and can move relatively untouched through the same media within which electromagnetic waves would diffuse. Given these properties, it's not far-fetched to assume that some extraterrestrial intelligence is also trying to communicate with us with neutrinos, in addition to radio waves.

There is another basis to this assumption. Scientists are still trying to understand some instances of radioactive decay that involve (i.e. are mediated by) neutrinos.

Specifically, these instances of radioactive decay wouldn't have happened unless they involved neutrinos from some source in outer space.

Mathematically, a radioactive decay obeys an exponential decay law. That is, the decay rate is proportional to the number of atoms there are. But in a 2017 experiment at Purdue University, scientists found that the decay rate of radioactive manganese declined sharply. They found that this could be explained if the rate was "responding to small changes" in the ambient flow of neutrinos. Based on their experiment, the scientists proposed setting up such decay experiments at different sites around the world, and analyse the data collected for signs of a non-uniform neutrino flux – which could in turn be associated with events in outer space. They called their proposal NU-SETI, and wrote:

"Even though we do not yet understand theoretically why some radioactive decays are particularly sensitive to neutrino-induced perturbations, the premise of our NU-SETI proposal is that this is an experimental fact, which an advanced extraterrestrial civilisation might clearly understand and could be using to communicate with us. Given the ... benefits of communication via neutrinos compared to radio waves, NU-SETI thus represents a new technology which could thus expand our reach in search of advanced extraterrestrial civilisations."

Messaging aliens

All this said about finding alternative ways to hear from intelligent alien life in outer space, there are also schemes to message them instead. They are collectively called Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence (METI). While the SETI era began in early 1960, two famous examples of METI followed in the next decade.

In 1972 and 1973, NASA launched the Pioneer 10 and 11 spacecraft to study the outer Solar System. Each spacecraft carried a plaque depicting the male and the female human bodies, a property of hydrogen atoms, cosmic landmarks that could help locate the earth, and an image of the spacecraft itself. In 1974, a group of scientists (including Frank Drake and Carl Sagan) drafted a graphical message and encoded it into radio waves that were then broadcast by the Arecibo Telescope in Puerto Rico. The waves were aimed at the M13 globular cluster, a clump of several lakh stars around 25,000 lightyears away.

METI has received a boost in the last few decades after the launch of satellites and astronomy programmes to find exoplanets orbiting other stars. Based on these efforts, scientists have been able to find worlds that could potentially host life. These worlds also become potential targets for METI efforts, rather than having to issue powerful broadcasts into a vast region of space.

The Great Silence

While it has been more than six decades since we began listening for signs of extraterrestrial intelligence, we have not been able to break what has come to be called the 'Great Silence' of the universe. It could mean that there is no intelligent life beyond the earth – or that we are missing what an intelligence might be broadcasting. We need to eliminate many such alternative possibilities before we can be sure that our questing efforts suffice. For example, an alien community may be too far on the other side of the Milky Way galaxy or indeed too far away for their signals to reach us in a single lifetime. Or the aliens may just be listening and not broadcasting. And so forth.

METI has received a boost in the past few decades after the launch of satellites and astronomy programmes to find exoplanets

Performing SETI or METI activities is also a herculean task because we only have a few indirect methods at our disposal to traverse the long distances of space, setting aside the fact that we have no certain sense of what exactly we are looking for or what we should expect to find. Nonetheless, efforts on this front have expanded from the use of radio signals to optical telescopes to laser light to (prospectively) neutrinos.

An earthwide effort

As with the Arecibo and Pioneer plaque messages, SETI and METI practitioners also need to study different messaging options and choose based on how they are most likely to be intercepted or received in specific parts of space, or on specific worlds. They need to pay attention to the language and the content while also considering the properties of the medium of transmission.

Some METI efforts have proposed for physical structures or artefacts built by aliens. In 2015, scientists reported that light from the star KIC 8462852 (a.k.a. Tabby's Star) – some 1,470 lightyears away – exhibited a periodic dimming pattern for which they couldn't discern a natural explanation. One hypothesis is that some alien structure is obstructing our view of the star.

Finally, SETI and METI programmes have joined hands for a host of scientific (as well as social) initiatives designed to bring together experts from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities to conduct research and public outreach programmes.

Their aim is to increase both our technical understanding and the literacy at large of human longevity and sustenance on multigenerational timescales.

Of late, we have also had to countenance the interstellar aspirations of humankind, motivated as much by Elon Musk's aspiration to 'colonise' Mars as by a new space race to establish bases on the moon. All these efforts demand scholars working as a global community to understand what life is, where it can be expected to exist, what forms it can take, and how we can identify it.

(Qudsia Gani is an assistant professor in the Department of Physics, Government Degree College Pattan, Baramulla.)

Jeff Bezos stands in front of a launch vehicle developed by his spaceflight company Blue Origin. AFP

Can Amazon strategy help Blue Origin top SpaceX?

Reuters

An Amazon veteran tapped by Jeff Bezos to lead Blue Origin aims to pull from the e-commerce giant's speedy manufacturing playbook to give the space company's rocket launch and moon lander business a badly needed boost against Elon Musk's SpaceX.

Top priorities for Dave Limp, who led Amazon's lucrative devices unit, include accelerating development of Blue Origin's long-delayed New Glenn rocket and production of its powerful BE-4 engine, according to employees who attended the new CEO's company-wide meeting this month. Drawing comparisons with Amazon's customer-centric sales ethos, Mr. Limp stressed the importance of

In earth orbit, competitive pressure is mounting. SpaceX has launched multiple astronauts and nearly 100 missions to orbit this year with its Falcon 9

meeting schedule deadlines, said the employees, who asked not to be identified discussing the internal meeting. Mr. Limp also suggested placing greater focus on integrating software and artificial intelligence in manufacturing.

Blue Origin declined to make Mr. Limp available for an interview and didn't respond to questions for comment. On his first day on the job on December 4, Mr. Limp said on a LinkedIn post that he was "excited to get started".

Mr. Limp is seen as a trusted Bezos deputy capable of helping push Blue Origin through the final, complex stages of developing the heavy-lift New Glenn rocket, the company's long-delayed key to earth orbit and main challenge to SpaceX's dominant Falcon 9.

The clock is ticking as customers, such as Amazon's satellite internet unit Kuiper, wait to fly on New Glenn, which is critical to Blue Origin generating meaningful revenue.

Vast footprint

Though it has yet to reach orbit, Blue Origin's industry footprint is vast. Mr. Limp will also oversee plans to build a moon lander for NASA, an orbital space station and a business centered on maneuverable servicing and refueling satellites. He will also lead the restart of Blue Origin's suborbital space tourism and research business as its only active rocket, the small, reusable New Shepard, returns to flight from a 15-month grounding.

In earth orbit, competitive pressure is mounting. SpaceX has launched multiple astronauts and nearly 100 missions to orbit this year with its Falcon 9. Musk is vowing to upend the global launch market with cheaper rides to space on SpaceX's fully reusable Starship.

NASA is pushing for speed in its Artemis moon program, where Blue Origin's lunar lander concept will be a second ride for astronauts to the moon's surface after SpaceX's Starship.

"They need to get their act together, they need to deliver," said George Sowers, a space industry consultant who worked with Blue Origin as an executive at United Launch Alliance (ULA), a joint venture of Boeing and Lockheed Martin. "They've had the luxury of not having to make a profit to survive, because Bezos has been funding them," Sowers said. "But at some point that's not a sustainable model."

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Black, the colour born of the absence of light

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

There are many similar roots for the word 'black' in English, such as *bhleg* from the Proto-Indo-European language and *blach* from the Old High German. Specify a Sanskrit word that means 'black' or 'dark' and is also the name of a Hindu deity.

QUESTION 2

Name the chemical coating announced by the U.K. National Physical Laboratory and Surrey NanoSystems in 2014. This coating – part of whose name stands for "vertically aligned (carbon) nanotube arrays" – was until 2019 the blackest substance known to humans.

QUESTION 3

In 2019, researchers at this private university in the U.S. reported a material – also composed of vertically aligned carbon nanotubes – that they found could absorb 99.995% of all the light incident on it, rendering its appearance even darker than the substance in Q2. Name the university.

QUESTION 4

When a pure colour is mixed with black, it gives rise a shade of that colour. Shades differ from the 'parent' colour only in their lightness, not in their _____. Fill in the blank with a term that denotes a combination of a colour's hue and intensity.

QUESTION 5

In the 14th century, people were able to make a deep black dye from ____-____, which were small tumours that typically grow on oak trees. These tumours were formed when some wasps secreted some substances into the tree. Fill in the blanks.

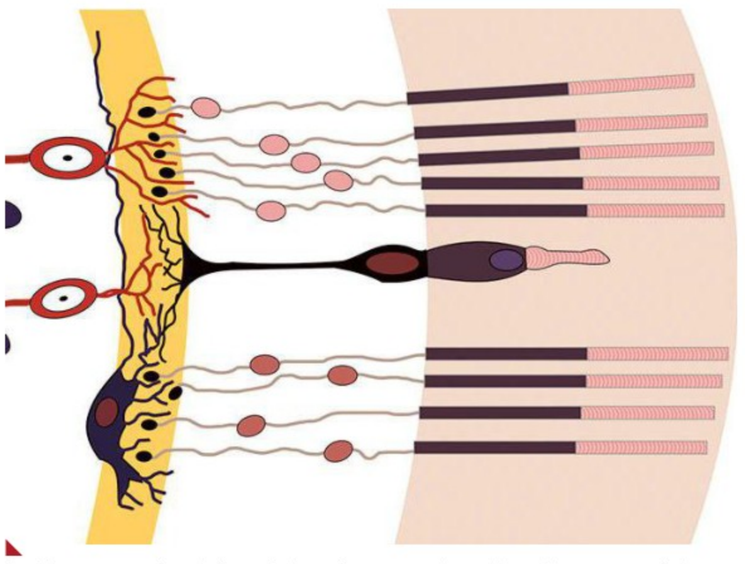
Answers to December 21 quiz:

1. Country that named Cyclone Mocha in May 2023 – **Ans: Yemen**
2. Name for intense tropical storms in the Northwest Pacific – **Ans: Typhoons**
3. Name for intense storms in the North Atlantic Ocean – **Ans: Hurricanes**
4. Scale used to categorise major Western hemisphere storms – **Ans: Saffir-Simpson scale**
5. Central area around which air currents spin in a cyclone – **Ans: Eye**

Visual: **Coriolis effect**

First contact:

Chandan Y. | Shalini Vaishya | Pushkar Trivedi | Manish Keshari | Yogapriya Karthigeyan



In this cross-sectional view of the retina, name the cells at the extreme right. They enable vision when it is dark but can't sense colours. RAMON Y CAJAL (CC BY-SA 3.0)

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

A nurse attends to a COVID-19 patient in the ICU of Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases in Bengaluru on December 19. PTI

JN.1 variant: State to start comprehensive audit of deaths

Afshan Yasmeen
BENGALURU

With the samples of three COVID-19 patients (who died since December 15 in Bengaluru and Ramanagara) found to be positive for JN.1 and more deaths being reported in a short span, the State Health Department is all set to start a comprehensive audit of all deaths.

On Monday, three more deaths of male patients – 65, 77, and 83 years – were reported. With this, the total number of deaths since December 15 has touched seven.

According to details made available by the Health Department, one death each has been reported from Dakshina Kannada, Hassan, and Bengaluru Urban on December 22, 23 and 24, respectively. All three were hospitalised with breathlessness. Although they were diagnosed with SARI, they also had other comorbidities. While Type 1 respiratory failure and Multi-Organ Dysfunction (MODS) have been said to be the cause of death in two patients, the third one died due to Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS).

Incidental finding?

State Health Commissioner Randeep D. told *The Hindu* on Monday that a comprehensive audit of all deaths reported since December will be taken up to identify fatalities that can be attributed only to COVID-19 and the underlying cause in deaths where COVID-19 findings were incidental. "While whole genome sequencing (WGS) results will confirm the infecting variant, it is important to find out the exact cause of death in patients," he said. "The district death audit committees are already existing and will be reactivated. The committees will be asked to analyse the deaths to find out the common symptoms in the patients, if any particular age group was being affected, whether they had comorbidities, whether they reported early and got timely medical help, and their vaccination status, among other things. The district committees will submit their findings to the State death audit committee that will compile and summarise the same to chalk out early intervention strategies," he said.

"The analysis of the symptoms and age group will also help us create awareness among people on the warning signs and the importance of reporting early to hospitals. Based on the analysis, we will also submit a proposal to the Cabinet sub-committee after discussion in the TAC if there is a need to provide additional human resources in the ICUs of State-run hospitals," he said.

Previous death audit

Since the pandemic hit Karnataka on March 8, 2020, till date, the State Health Department has recorded a total of 40,324 deaths. The previous death audit during the third wave had thrown up some vital aspects. "We had noticed that a majority of the deaths in the third wave could have been prevented if patients had reported early. Also, over 80% of the deaths in the third wave were among those with comorbidities," the Commissioner said.

Pointing out that people would have ignored symptoms at home for long and would have rushed to hospitals only when symptoms aggravated, the Commissioner said, "The pattern of deaths in the second wave was different from the third."

One dead, 135 hospitalised after suspected food poisoning at Hoskote

More than 70 patients who were admitted visited temples on Hanuma Jayanti on Sunday

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

One person died and 135 have been hospitalised at six different hospitals since Sunday after suspected food poisoning at Hoskote on the outskirts of the city.

The Health Department is now investigating the source of food poisoning, amidst speculations that it could have been caused by temple 'prasada' or even water-borne.

The deceased identified as Siddagangamma, 64, a resident of Kaveri Nagar, consumed the 'prasada' which was given by her husband, Shivanna, on Saturday. He visited three temples – Venkataramana Swamy temple, Oorubagilu Anjaneya temple, and Kote Anjaneyaswamy temple.

He gave his daughter and wife 'puliyogare', 'payasa', and 'laddoo'. The daughter is also being treated for food poisoning at a hospital. The mother-daughter duo complained of dysentery and vomiting on Sunday, and Siddagangamma died on Monday.

Sharath Bache Gowda, MLA, enquiring the health of a patient at a hospital on Monday.

Like her, 135 others also exhibited the same symptoms and have to admitted hospitals. More than 70 patients who were admitted visited these temples on Hanuma Jayanti on Sunday. Several patients are in ICU.

According to a senior police officer and a Health Department official, it was initially suspected that food from either of these temples was the source of poisoning but later when patients who did not consume food from these temples were admitted this has come into question.

The police officer said at Anjaneya temple, the 'laddoo' that was given to devotees was one day old but it could not be said with certainty that this was the source of food poisoning.

A Health official said his department, which was probing the case, also believed that the poisoning may have happened owing to contaminated water

"We are also investigating the water angle because patients who didn't visit these temples are also admitted to hospitals," he said. Hoskote MLA Sharath Bache Gowda, police and Health officials visited the temple and spoke to family members of the patients and those of the deceased.

Festival prayers

Christmas celebrations at St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, and (right) at St. Basilica Church in Bengaluru on Monday. SUDHAKARA JAIN AND PTI

From Page One

Farmers wish for drought as loans will be waived: Minister

The Minister's comments on drought drew sharp reaction from farmers' leaders as well as the Opposition.

'Insult to farmers'

Sidagouda Modagi, Krishik Samaj leader, said that the Minister's remarks had hurt and insulted farmers. "Mr. Patil seems to have forgotten that he is a farmer first and then a politician and Minister. What he is saying is the prejudice carried by most of the urban elite who think that farmers are living on government largesse funded at the taxpayer's expense. Mr. Patil, coming from a farmer's family in rural north Karnataka should not speak like this and add to the prejudice of the rich city dwellers. The truth is that farmers are fighting so many visible enemies like middlemen and loan sharks and invisible enemies like climate change and erratic monsoon," he said.

Social media

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R. Ashok took to social media to attack the Minister, saying it was an "insult to the farming community".

He said that it added to the woes of farmers who were already reeling under drought. BJP State unit president B.Y. Vijayendra and senior leader C.T. Ravi were among others who criticised the Minister for his remarks.

Karnataka reports 34 JN.1 cases, including three deaths

The State is yet to meet its target of conducting 5,000 COVID-19 tests daily. On Monday, 3,155 tests were done of which 2,072 were RT-PCR tests. With this, the test positivity rate stood at 3.96%.

With three more deaths – one each from Hassan, Bengaluru Urban and Dakshina Kannada – the total number of deaths reported since December 15 has touched seven. The recently formed Cabinet sub-committee will meet on Tuesday to take stock of the situation.

No need to panic

Asserting that there is no need to panic, Mr. Gundu Rao said currently, the World Health Organisation has classified JN.1 as a Variant of Interest and not a Variant of Concern. "Hence, imposing restrictions and creating unnecessary panic amongst the public is not advisable," he said.

"However, in the light of the current scenario, in the State, the COVID-19 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has advised that the elderly (60 years and above), those with comorbid conditions (particularly with kidney, heart, liver ailments, etc.), pregnant women and lactating women, should avoid visiting closed, poorly ventilated spaces and crowded areas.

However, when outdoors, they should wear face masks covering their nose and mouth," the Minister reiterated.

Safe celebrations

Stating that there are no guidelines from the Centre as of now regarding restrictions for New Year celebrations, the Minister said: "During the year-end festivities and New Year celebrations, people should follow COVID-19 Appropriate Behavior – social distancing, face masking, hand-sanitization and respiratory hygiene/ cough etiquette. Depending on the situation, the TAC and Cabinet sub-committee will take a call in the coming days."

Timings
BENGALURU

TUESDAY, DEC. 26	
RISE 06:39	SET 18:01
RISE 17:25	SET 05:54
WEDNESDAY, DEC. 27	
RISE 06:39	SET 18:02
RISE 18:21	SET 06:50
THURSDAY, DEC. 28	
RISE 06:40	SET 18:02
RISE 19:17	SET 07:44

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	30	23
Mysuru	30	24
Bengaluru	29	18

Bengaluru Today
30ºC The weather will be dry. Morning will cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm and humid.. Night will be cool.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
29ºC A dry weather to prevail. Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night will remain cool.

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THE HINDU
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A year of many reversals and reforms in education sector

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

As the new Congress-led government took charge in the State in May 2023, the education sector, which had been a hub of controversies during the previous BJP regime, saw many reversals.

NEP-2020 scrapped

The incumbent Congress government announced that it would scrap the National Education Policy (NEP) - 2020, a policy framed by the BJP-led Union government and the party's State government took pride in claiming they were the first State to implement it. However, NEP - 2020 has been controversial since its inception.

Multiple entries and exits from courses, four years of Honours degree, and selection of core and non-core subjects are said to be unscientific and hastily implemented. "The NEP emphasized privatization of higher education, which would deprive students coming from oppressed communities of higher education. Steps have been taken to saffronise the education sector in the name of holistic education," said development educationist V.P. Niranjanaradhya, who petitioned Rahul Gandhi to scrap NEP-2020 if they came to power in the State, during Bharat Jodo Yatra's Karnataka leg. This made it to the Congress manifesto.

State Education Policy

The incumbent government said it would come out with a Karnataka State Education Policy by the next academic year. The State government constituted a 15-member committee to formulate KSEP under the chairmanship of Sukhdev Thorat, educationist, economist, and former chairman of the University Grant Commission. They are expected to submit their report by February 28, 2024.

Revision of textbooks

The Congress government also formed five committees led by Prof. M.G. Hegde, a retired professor at Rani Chennamma University, Belagavi, for revision of school textbooks in time for the next academic year.

REWIND 2023

The previous BJP regime had formed a committee led by Hindutva activist Rohith Chakratirtha to revise school textbooks drafted by a committee led by writer Baragur Ramachandrappa. This exercise included lessons written by several Hindutva icons, including Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh founder K.B. Hedgewar, among other changes, that turned controversial.

Once the Congress came to power, with little time to completely revise textbooks for this academic year, it re-revised them to make some "corrections, additions, and deletions" under the guidance of Mr. Ramachandrappa again, promising to bring revised textbooks for the next academic year.

Ban on hijab

A few days ago, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that the government would withdraw the ban on hijab in educational institutions that was imposed by the previous BJP regime in 2022. However, following intense opposition from the BJP, the Chief Minister backtracked and said a final decision would be taken after discussing it in the Cabinet and with the Law Department.

Three annual exams

The State government decided to bring major reforms to the Class X and II Pre-University exams from 2023-24. The government abolished supplementary exams, and instead, it would hold three annual exams. Students can write all three exams and the best of their marks will be considered for the marks-sheet, which will not mention which exam the marks came from. .

Distribution of eggs

Earlier, the government was providing eggs/banana/groundnut chikki as an additional input along with midday meals to the students from classes I to VIII across the State. Upon public demand, the new Congress government extended this to even class IX and X students.

Placements affected

Characterised by the economic crisis on a global level and the growing gap between industry and academia, the job placements of thousands of students – both engineering and non-engineering were affected this year.

In May this year, engineering students in tier-2 and tier-3 colleges were not able to secure jobs as companies did not even turn up on campuses for recruitment, barring those who had taken up Computer Science and Information Science courses. There was also an uproar around the same time as some engineering colleges demanded placement fees from students.

Coming to non-engineering courses in fields like chemistry, botany, physics, and social sciences, even the students who had secured higher grades also struggled to find jobs due to a lack of industry knowledge. This year's placement patterns yet again highlighted the need to shorten the academia-industry gap.

Many MBA colleges also saw a drop in the number of recruitments done by MNC companies due to a dip in the number of projects.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount raised from disinvestment in 10 years

4.2 in Rs. lakh crore. The disinvestment target for FY24 is again likely to be missed. In the current fiscal, out of the budgeted amount of ₹51,000 crore, ₹10,049 crore has been collected through minority stake sales via IPO and OFS. PTI

Death toll in northwest China's earthquake earlier this week

149 The 6.2-magnitude earthquake that jolted northwest China is the deadliest since an earthquake killed 617 people in Yunnan province. The Quake hit Jishishan County, Gansu Province, and Minhe County in the Qinghai Province. PTI

Stake British billionaire agreed to buy in Man Utd.

25 in percent. Jim Ratcliffe has agreed to a deal to buy a stake in Manchester United for about $1.3 billion. It brings to an end a lengthy saga when United's unpopular U.S. owners said they were considering "strategic alternatives" to help the club grow. AFP

Persons killed in central Gaza in a deadly strike

60 In one of the deadliest strikes of the war, Israel's leaders also acknowledged the "very heavy price" after 15 soldiers were killed. The war has devastated parts of Gaza, killed 20,400 Palestinians and displaced almost 2.3 million people. AP

Activists from Turbat freed by Pakistani police

290 The activists had travelled 1,600 kilometers from Turbat to protest forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in the southwest. AP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Trump's insurrection role: legal impact

How does the Colorado Supreme Court's ruling regarding Donald Trump's eligibility align with historical interpretations of the 14th Amendment's Section 3? What specific evidence led the court to conclude that Mr. Trump's involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection disqualified him from appearing on the 2024 presidential ballot?

WORLD INSIGHT

Mark A. Graber

In 2024, former President Donald Trump will face some of his greatest challenges: criminal court cases, primary opponents and constitutional challenges to his eligibility to hold the office of president again. The Colorado Supreme Court has pushed that latter piece to the forefront, ruling on December 19 that Mr. Trump cannot appear on Colorado's 2024 presidential ballot because of his involvement in the January 6, 2021, insurrection.

The reason is the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1868, three years after the Civil War ended. Section 3 of that amendment wrote into the Constitution the principle President Abraham Lincoln set out just three months after the first shots were fired in the Civil War. On July 4, 1861, he spoke to Congress, declaring that "when ballots have fairly, and constitutionally, decided, there can be no successful appeal back to bullets."

The text of Section 3 of the 14th Amendment states, in full:

"No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability."

To me as a scholar of constitutional law, each sentence and sentence fragment captures the commitment made by the nation in the wake of the Civil War to govern by constitutional politics. People seeking political and constitutional changes must play by the rules set out in the Constitution. In a democracy, people cannot substitute force, violence or intimidation for persuasion, coalition building and voting.

Office hurdle: Former U.S. President and 2024 presidential hopeful Donald Trump gestures at the end of a campaign event in Waterloo, Iowa, on December 19. AFP

THE GIST

- The Colorado Supreme Court ruled Donald Trump ineligible for the 2024 presidential ballot based on the 14th Amendment, Section 3, citing his involvement in the January 6, 2021, insurrection.
- Section 3 disqualifies individuals from holding office if they engaged in insurrection against the United States, emphasising governance through constitutional politics, not force.
- It applies to all federal and state offices, requiring adherence to the oath to uphold the Constitution and ensuring that officeholders respect the rules of governance.
- The provision targets those resorting to violence when ballots fail to achieve desired outcomes, emphasising the significance of democratic principles over force.
- However, there's a possibility of redemption through congressional action (by a two-thirds vote of each House) to remove the disqualification in exceptional cases.

The power of the ballot

The first words of Section 3 describe various offices that people can only hold if they satisfy the constitutional rules for election or appointment. The Republicans who wrote the amendment repeatedly declared that Section 3 covered all offices established by the Constitution. That included the presidency, a point many participants in framing, ratifying and implementation debates over constitutional disqualification made explicitly, as documented in the records of debate in the 39th Congress, which wrote and passed the amendment.

Senators, representatives and presidential electors are spelled out because some doubt existed when the amendment was debated in 1866 as to whether they were officers of the United States, although they were frequently referred to as such in the course of congressional debates.

No one can hold any of the offices enumerated in Section 3 without the power of the ballot. They can only hold office if they are voted into it - or nominated and confirmed by people who have been voted into office. No office mentioned in the first clause of Section 3 may be achieved by force, violence or intimidation.

A required oath

The next words in Section 3 describe the oath "to support [the] Constitution" that Article 6 of the Constitution requires all office holders in the United States to take.

The people who wrote Section 3 insisted during congressional debates that anyone who took an oath of office, including the president, were subject to Section 3's rules. The presidential oath's wording is slightly different from that of other federal officers, but everyone in the federal government swears to uphold the Constitution before being allowed to take office.

These oaths bind officeholders to follow all the rules in the Constitution. The only legitimate government officers are those who hold their offices under the constitutional rules. Lawmakers must follow the Constitution's rules for making laws. Officeholders can only recognise laws that were made by following the rules - and they must recognise all such laws as legitimate.

This provision of the amendment ensures that their oaths of office obligate officials to govern by voting rather than violence.

Defining disqualification

Section 3 then says people can be disqualified from holding office if they "engaged in insurrection or rebellion." Legal authorities from the American Revolution to the post-Civil War Reconstruction understood an insurrection to have occurred when two or more people resisted a federal law by force or violence for a public, or civic, purpose. Shay's Rebellion, the Whiskey Insurrection, Burr's Rebellion, John Brown's Raid and other events were insurrections, even when the goal was not overturning the government.

What these events had in common was that people were trying to prevent the enforcement of laws that were consequences of persuasion, coalition building and voting. Or they were trying to create new laws by force, violence and intimidation. These words in the amendment declare that those who turn to bullets when ballots fail to provide their desired result cannot be trusted as democratic officials. When applied specifically to the events on January 6, 2021, the amendment declares that those who turn to violence when voting goes against them cannot hold office in a democratic nation.

A chance at clemency

The last sentence of Section 3 announces that forgiveness is possible. It says "Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability" - the ineligibility of individuals or categories of people to hold office because of having participated in an insurrection or rebellion.

For instance, Congress might remove the restriction on office-holding based on evidence that the insurrectionist was genuinely contrite. It did so for repentant former Confederate General James Longstreet.

Or Congress might conclude in retrospect that violence was appropriate, such as against particularly unjust laws. Given their powerful anti-slavery commitments and abolitionist roots, I believe that Republicans in the House and Senate in the late 1850s would almost certainly have allowed people who violently resisted the fugitive slave laws to hold office again. This provision of the amendment says that bullets may substitute for ballots and violence for voting only in very unusual circumstances.

A clear conclusion

Taken as a whole, the structure of Section 3 leads to the conclusion that Mr. Trump is one of those past or present government officials who by violating his oath of allegiance to the constitutional rules has forfeited his right to present and future office.

Mr. Trump's supporters say the president is neither an "officer under the United States" nor an "officer of the United States" as specified in Section 3.

Therefore, they say, he is exempt from its provisions. But in fact, both common sense and history demonstrate that Mr. Trump was an officer, an officer of the United States and an officer under the United States for constitutional purposes. Most people, even lawyers and constitutional scholars like me, do not distinguish between those specific phrases in ordinary discourse. The people who framed and ratified Section 3 saw no distinction.

Exhaustive research by Trump supporters has yet to produce a single assertion to the contrary that was made in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. Yet scholars John Vlahoplus and Gerard Magliocca are daily producing newspaper and other reports asserting that presidents are covered by Section 3.

Significant numbers of Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate agreed that Donald Trump violated his oath of office immediately before, during and immediately after the events of Jan. 6, 2021. Most Republican senators who voted against his conviction did so on the grounds that they did not have the power to convict a president who was no longer in office.

Most of them did not dispute that Trump participated in an insurrection. A judge in Colorado also found that Mr. Trump "engaged in insurrection," which was the basis for the state's Supreme Court ruling barring him from the ballot.

Constitutional democracy is rule by law. Those who have demonstrated their rejection of rule by law may not apply, no matter their popularity. Jefferson Davis participated in an insurrection against the United States in 1861. He was not eligible to become president of the U.S. four years later, or to hold any other state or federal office ever again. If Davis was barred from office, then the conclusion must be that Mr. Trump is too - as a man who participated in an insurrection against the United States in 2021.

(This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license. The original article appeared on December 20. The author is a University System of Maryland Regents Professor of Law, University of Maryland)

Govt. to go slow on revoking hijab ban, other controversial issues till LS polls

Congress feels that focus on such issues is likely to dilute the significance of 'guarantees' implemented to help the poor and women; moreover, revoking the ban would provide fresh political ammunition to BJP to launch a campaign against the party, say sources

Nagesh Prabhu
BENGALURU

As the Congress high command is wary of the electoral implications of the Karnataka government's proposal to revoke the hijab ban in classrooms, the Central leaders have apparently suggested to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to go slow on controversial issues till the 2024 general elections.

The debate on the hijab issue gained prominence after Mr. Siddaramaiah announced at a public meeting in Mysuru district last week that his government would lift the ban imposed by the previous BJP government.

Elections to the Lok Sabha are scheduled to be held in April-May. The Congress government's proposal on revoking the ban order on hijab would dilute the significance of the poll guarantees implemented in the State, it is argued.

The Chief Minister's 'unilateral' announcement on revoking the hijab ban, a few days after talks with the party's Central leaders, evidently has not gone well with other senior leaders.FILE PHOTO

Moreover, revoking the ban would provide fresh political ammunition to the Opposition BJP to launch a campaign against the Congress on communal lines. The obvious fear is that such a decision in the State could create a ripple effect on the party's prospects nationally, sources in the Congress said. The Congress is likely to focus its electoral campaign on poll guarantees it had implemented targeting largely the poor and women.

The Chief Minister's "unilateral" announcement on revoking the hijab ban, a few days after talks with the party's Central leaders in New Delhi, evidently has not gone down well with the other senior leaders in the party.

Though some Ministers backed the Chief Minister, senior leader and Home Minister G. Parameshwara adopted a cautious approach and said that the government will take a decision "after looking into it deeply." The Congress poll manifesto was silent on the hijab ban.

Sources said that the government is unlikely to take a decision on the matter since it was pending before the Supreme Court.

The voters belonging to the minority communities, especially Muslims, backed the party in the Assembly elections and the community is expected to back the party in the Lok Sabha elections as well, more so as the JD(S) has struck an alliance with the BJP, a party functionary said.

Prior to this, importantly, the Congress government backed out from repealing the Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2022, popularly known as the "anti-conversion law", which was one of the most controversial laws ushered in during the previous BJP regime. The Siddaramaiah-led Cabinet had discussed the Bill but it has not yet taken any action on tabling it in the legislature.

The government had also not taken any decision on repealing the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, 2020, replacing it with the older version of the legislation, which was brought into force by the previous BJP regime.

Mr. Siddaramaiah, who held an official celebration of Tipu Jayanthi during his first term, has refrained from celebrations in his second term this year.

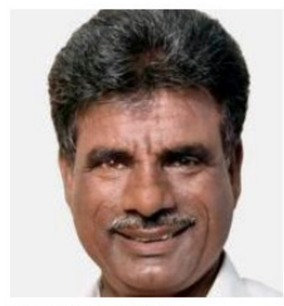
The party in its poll manifesto promised to restore 4% quota for the Muslim community which was repealed by the BJP government. So far, no action has been taken on the matter either.

The Siddaramaiah government had decided to roll back the APMC Act passed by the previous government. But the combined BJP and the JD(S) blocked the Bill in the Legislative Council. The Bill has been referred to the House Committee for review.

So far, it has taken the decision to scrap the New Education Policy of the Modi government and formed an expert committee to frame the syllabus.

Srinivas Poojary named Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU


Kota Srinivas Poojary

Kota Srinivas Poojary, 64, has been nominated as Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council.

The BJP high command approved his appointment on Monday. Mr. Kota had earlier served as both Leader of the Opposition in the Council (2018-19) and as Leader of the House in the Council (2019-23).

Sunil Valyapure, who was a contender for the post, has been appointed as Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Council.

Senior MLC N. Ravikumar has been appointed as the Chief Whip in the Council.

In Assembly

Arvind Bellad, who had been lobbying for the posts of both the president of the BJP unit in Karnataka and the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, has been appointed as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly.

Doddanagouda G. Patil, senior MLA from Hunugund, Bagalkot district, has been appointed as the Chief Whip of the party in the Assembly.

With these long-pending appointments, the BJP has set up a full-fledged new team in Karnataka.

While V. Sunil Kumar and Mr. Bellad, contenders for top posts in the party, have been accommodated, those who openly rebelled against the party, like Basanagouda Patil Yatnal, have not been given any post.

Appointments to boards, corporations to be delayed

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Rahul Gandhi has apparently told Karnataka leaders that appointment of only senior legislators would send a wrong message to the party cadre.

The Congress Central leaders, specifically Rahul Gandhi, is believed to have instructed Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to redo the list of names for appointments to the government-owned boards and corporations in the State.

Sources in the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee told *The Hindu* that Mr. Gandhi suggested that the Chief Minister include a good number of party leaders and workers while issuing orders for appointment to 80-odd boards and corporations. This could cause a further delay in the appointments and cause resentment among the legislators and leaders.

Following uneasiness among leaders, especially legislators, over the delay in the appointments, Mr. Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar visited New Delhi last week and held talks with Central leaders. However, Mr. Gandhi reportedly rejected the list which largely contained the names of senior legislators.

Message to cadre

Mr. Gandhi had apparently told the State leaders that appointment of only senior legislators would send a wrong message to the party cadre who play a vital role during the Lok Sabha election.

A party functionary said the Chief Minister was keen on appointment of only senior legislators, who had not been accommodated in the ministry, to douse their discontent, in the first phase.

Mr. Siddaramaiah was in favour of appointment of party leaders and workers after the general elections. However, Mr. Shivakumar was firm on giving priority to party leaders and workers in the appointments in the first phase and legislators in the second phase.

Randeep Singh Surjewala, AICC general secretary in-charge of Karnataka, has already held two rounds of talks with State Congress leaders on the matter but is yet to evolve a consensus.

Notices issued to Centre, Karnataka and Kerala on dumping endosulfan in Minchinpadavu

The Hindu Bureau
MANGALURU

The National Green Tribunal's southern Bench in Chennai has issued notices to the Union, the Karnataka, and the Kerala governments and their respective pollution control boards, the Central Pollution Control Board, and the Kottayam-headquartered Plantation Corporation of Kerala (PCK), on a complaint of alleged illegal and unscientific dumping of endosulfan in the hilly area of Minchinpadavu in Kasaragod district of Kerala, which is near Nettanige-Mudnur village in Karnataka.

In the complaint, Ravindranath Shanbhogue, president of Udupi-based Human Rights Protection Foundation, had sought directions against the respondents, especially against the PCK over alleged dumping of endosulfan in an abandoned well within the plantation area of PCK.

The dumping has contaminated the groundwater, which affected residents of Nettanige-Mundnur and adjoining villages downhill in Karnataka, he alleged.

Mr. Shanbhogue, who has been fighting for endosulfan victims, said endosulfan has been sprayed by PCK in cashew plantations at Minchinpadavu for over two decades.

A file photo of a team of activists collecting samples from a waterbody in Nettanige Mudnur in Dakshina Kannada district, which is near Minchinpadavu in Kasaragod district of Kerala.

Following protests by environmentalists, the PCK discontinued spraying endosulfan in 2002. Spraying of endosulfan resulted in several children being born with mental and physical impairment. Among those severely affected included the neighbourhood of Nenjuparamba cashew plantations at Minchinpadavu.

In DK district

In 2001, more than 600 endosulfan victims were found in four taluks of Dakshina Kannada. Mr. Shanbhogue launched awareness programmes on effects of endosulfan and other pesticides.

Following a writ petition by Democratic Youth Federation of India, the Supreme Court passed an interim order in May 2011 banning production, use, and sale of endosulfan. The PCK decided to dispose off its stock of endosulfan at different warehouses.

They were sent to the PCK warehouse in Minchinpadavu.

In the first week of June 2013, Achuta Maniyani, the security guard at the warehouse, soon after his retirement, claimed to have disposed of containers of unused endosulfan in an abandoned well under the instructions of PCK officials.

Mr. Shanbhogue contended that water samples collected by Dakshina Kannada district officials from Nettinanige Mudnur, downhill of Minchinapadvu, revealed traces of endosulfan. As many as 36 endosulfan victims were found in Nettanige Mudnur and neighbouring Padvannor and Badagannur villages.

As endosulfan has not been sprayed in these villages, there is an allegation that the endosulfan dumped in hillocks of Minchinapadavu of Kerala must had entered the groundwater of villages in Dakshina Kannada, which had affected the villagers.

Mr. Shanbhogue has sought direction by NGT to the Kerala government for safe and secure extraction of endosulfan cans from the abandoned well near Minchinapadavu hillocks. He has also sought directions to the pollution control boards of Kerala and Karnataka for carrying out groundwater analysis in villages on the Karnataka-Kerala border that are adjacent to Nethanagi village of Kasaragod district.

On December 20, the Bench of NGT southern zone, comprising judicial member Pushpa Sathyanarayana and expert member Satyagopal Korlapati, directed issuance of notices to all the seven respondents.

They were asked to file appropriate reports after a spot inspection. Hearing of the case has been posted for January 2, 2024.

Kalladka's remarks on Muslim women condemned

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leader Kalladka Prabhakar Bhat's statements about Muslim women, made during Sankeerthana Yatra as part of the Hanuman Jayanthi celebrations in Mandya district, has been condemned by the Jagrutha Nagareekaru, Karnataka.

Call for police case

In a statement, the Jagrutha Nagareekaru said that the remarks of the leader should be condemned and the police should file a *suo motu* case against him.

"Such uncivilised remarks are insulting to not just Muslim women but to all women," said the organisation in a statement, urging the government not to keep quiet on the issue.

Among the signatories of the statement are G. Ramakrishna, K.S. Vimala, K. Marulasiddappa, Vijaya, Rajendra Chenni, Vasundhara Bhupathi, and others.

Triple talaq

Mr. Bhat had made the remarks while hailing the Narendra Modi-led government for banning triple talaq.

'Power project delays affecting operational efficiency of southern grid'

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

Delays in executing projects have made several power infrastructure companies and investors in Karnataka suffer and have started affecting the operational efficiency of the southern grid, say industry players.

For instance, construction and completion of several transmission lines in northern and coastal Karnataka, including Udupi Kasargod Transmission Line (UKTL) and Goa to Tanmar Line, are hugely delayed owing to stoppages mainly caused by litigations for acquiring lands for erecting power lines, they say.

According to the Energy Department, the State has been spending ₹1,268.55 crore every year for purchasing power FILE PHOTO

It is also feared that the ₹700 crore UKTL line, originally envisaged to provide a solution to spur the State's earnings from power surplus and address electricity shortage problems in north Kerala, may run into cost and time overruns, as per industry players.

"While officials cite court cases, power infrastructure companies suffer because of these inordinate delays," said an official at a power infrastructure company under anonymity.

The delays have prompted the government to recently extend the deadline for these projects to October 2024, from December, 2023.

Citing a recent court order, an industry source said that it gave a glimmer of hope.

A recent Mumbai High Court order stated that the State governments cannot delay projects owing to small protests over land acquisition issues. The court also thought that the magistrate should decide on matters related to land acquisition and not higher courts, to avoid delays and also to expedite projects.

"It has set a precedence and might give a glimmer of hope to many power projects in the State that are currently in limbo," anticipated an industry source.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, senior counsel in Karnataka High Court B.V. Krishnappa said: "Whenever a higher court gives orders in the nature regarding disputes which are common and general across the country, it paved the way for resolving issues regardless of jurisdiction."

According to the Energy Department, the State has been spending ₹1,268.55 crore every year for purchasing power and this year, till December 13, about 1,905.8 million units were purchased because of shortage of power.

In addition, keeping the drought situation in mind, the government was also reducing the emphasis on thermal power and increasing solar power generation by upto 2,000 MW during peak hours.

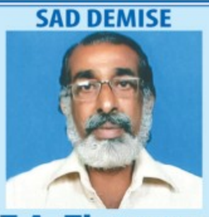
However, Gaurav Gupta, Additional Chief Secretary, Energy Department, said that Karnataka has been implementing a large number of power projects successfully across the State and the government was very proactive.

However, projects under the tariff-based competitive bidding for inter-State transmission come with several ground-level issues including high habitation zones, forest clearances, compensation, litigation and many other issues, he told *The Hindu*.

"We have some projects involving private players. Such projects requires strong ground level consultation with Forest Department and local authorities in addition to obtaining required clearances from the Ministry of Power. We are actively following up on these projects," Mr. Gupta further added.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE
DEATH

SAD DEMISE



T.A. Thomson
February 16,1944 - December 25, 2023
"For dust you are and to dust you shall return" - Genesis 3:19
Funeral Mass at 3:00pm, at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Whitefield Followed by burial at 4:00pm, at Whitefield Christian Cemetery on Tuesday, 26th December 2023
Survived by:
Jessy Thomson (Wife)
Swapna Sajan (Daughter)
Sajan Abraham (Son-in-law)
Leon Sajan and Aidan Sajan (Grandchildren) and Relatives

BUILDING BLOCKS

GETTY IMAGES

A dive into sanitation solutions: processing, managing and treating used water

Sanitation systems play a pivotal role in safeguarding public health and the environment by managing used water; these systems encompass various types, from on-site solutions like twin pits and septic tanks to centralised sewer networks leading to treatment facilities

K.V. Santhosh Ragavan
Mahima Vijendra

Apart from the water we drink and consume through our food, we use water for cooking, cleaning ourselves and our homes, and washing clothes and utensils. Where does the used water from our homes go?

Common answers to this question are into the ground, into the open space around the house, into pipes underground or into open drains or canals, among other water bodies. Some of these responses are not entirely wrong, but the key concern is where this used water should go.

It should go into sanitation systems designed to contain, convey, treat, and either dispose of or reuse the used water (given its value as a resource, the term 'used water' is preferred over 'wastewater') – ensuring good public health and reducing environmental pollution. While rudimentary sanitation was introduced by ancient civilisations around 4000 BC, the modern sanitation system was built in London around the 1800s.

What are the types of sanitation systems?

The type depends on where you live. In rural areas or spacious urban residences, used water goes into twin pits or septic tanks, also known as on-site sanitation systems (OSS), connected below ground to toilets.

While twin pits and septic tanks are widely used, other OSS types include bio-digester toilets, bio-tanks, and urine diversion dry toilets. These systems serve as collection and storage structures that passively treat the used water and dispose of the liquid into the surrounding soil. The residue that collects within the pits and septic tanks is called faecal sludge, or septage, and is composed primarily of solids from human excreta.

Twin pits are two pits separated by at least one metre. The pits, used alternatively, have porous walls that allow the liquid part of used water to soak into the ground while solids collect and degrade at the bottom of the pit.

When one pit reaches capacity, it is covered and left unused for two years until its contents are dry, pathogen-free, and safe for reuse. In this period, the second pit operates, and the cycle repeats.

Twin pits are a complete system by itself, as the full sanitation cycle from containment to treatment and disposal happens within the pit and its immediate surroundings. However, they may not be suitable for all locations, such as rocky soil where water percolates slowly. In such conditions, septic tanks along with pits or other forms of soakaways are used.

Septic tanks are watertight; as used water flows through the tank, solids settle at the bottom, while scum – mostly oil and grease – floats to the top. The clear liquid is disposed of in the surrounding soil through pits that are like twin pits or in a longer, shallower trench.

While settled solids in septic tanks degrade over time, the accumulated faecal sludge and scum must be removed at regular intervals. This is done using trucks equipped with vacuum pumps that suck the faecal sludge out and transport it to treatment facilities called faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs).

Conversely, in densely populated urban areas that lack space within properties, an underground network of pipes – a.k.a. sewers – collects and conveys the used water to treatment facilities.

This network of interconnected pipes transports used water from toilets, bathrooms, kitchens to treatment facilities by gravity or with the help of pumps. Sewers have machine-holes for maintenance and to remove blockages. (Machine-holes is a better term than 'manholes', which is inappropriate since the law prohibits manual cleaning exercises.)

This used water, called sewage, is transported by sewers to sewage treatment plants (STPs).

What do treatment facilities do?

FSTPs can be either mechanical or gravity-based. Mechanised systems rely on equipment such as screw presses or centrifuges for dewatering; gravity-based systems use sand drying beds and sunlight.

The treated solids can be reused in agriculture when composted with organic municipal solid waste. Treated water is often reused in landscaping within the FSTP facilities. This process of containing, conveying and treating faecal sludge is also called faecal sludge management (FSM). In many small and medium towns or villages, OSS-FSM is the predominant form of the sanitation system.

STPs use a series of physical, biological, and chemical processes to remove pollutants and contaminants from used water. Like FSTPs, the treatment of used water has a primary stage that separates solids from the liquid part, followed by purification (where solids settle and are digested by microorganisms), and disinfection.

To facilitate the reuse of used water, advanced systems use additional treatment such as membrane filtration. STP technology can be of several types, either mechanised and non-mechanised, and is often chosen based on techno-managerial and the financial capacities of a city's government.

FSTPs are generally smaller than STPs and can be colocated with municipal solid waste management sites. They can also be decentralised and located closer to the sources of faecal sludge. In contrast, STPs are much larger, centralised installations designed to serve entire communities or large urban areas. They require substantial infrastructure and are typically located near water bodies so they can discharge treated water.

Why do we need such complex sanitation systems?

As water moves through its various domestic and non-domestic uses, it accumulates natural as well as human-introduced impurities – including organic matter, nutrients from detergents, pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites, and heavy metals from solvents and pesticides.

It also includes solids like soil, debris, minerals, and salts.

To ensure that used water doesn't pollute or cause public health issues as a result of these impurities when reintroduced into natural environments, it's essential to contain, remove, and treat used water before it is disposed of or reused.

Odour and aesthetics have long been the main drivers of sanitation, but it wasn't until their connections with public and environmental health became clear that people realised that using an "out of sight" approach was inadequate.

There have been significant improvements in public health since sanitation systems were invented, but universal access to safely managed sanitation services remains a challenge.

Overcoming issues like poorly designed and built systems and unsafe operation and maintenance practices are crucial to effectively manage used water and protect our increasingly precious water bodies and groundwater aquifers.

*(K.V. Santhosh Ragavan is a Senior Lead - Practice, at the Indian Institute of Human Settlements (IIHS), Bengaluru, and currently leads the Tamil Nadu Urban Sanitation Support Programme (*TNUSSP*). Mahima Vijendra is a Senior Consultant at IIHS and works on TNUSSP focusing on policy, governance and institutions)*

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Carnatic music is one of the oldest and most intricate musical traditions. Here is a quiz on Carnatic music

S. Venkataraghavan

QUESTION 1

Who was the lyricist and singer of "*Pi's Lullaby*" from the movie *Life of Pi*, which was nominated for the 2012 Oscars in the Best Original Song category.

QUESTION 2

What musical instrument that is used to play carnatic repertoire is considered to be one of the world's loudest non-brass acoustic instruments. The instrument is also similar to the North Indian wind instrument known as the Shehnai but has a longer body and a large flaring bell made out of wood.

QUESTION 3

Which musicologist, in 1917, published his research in Tamil music as Karunamirdha Sagaram, a 1346-page book, that remains a seminal work in the field today.

QUESTION 4

What is the name given to the on the spot improvisation done by carnatic musicians, this being a critical aspect of Carnatic music, allowing for personal expression within the structure of a raga? It includes several forms like Raga Alapana (exploration of the raga), Niraval (melodic variations on a line of the song), and Kalpanaswaram (improvisation of rhythmic patterns).

QUESTION 5

The percussion instrument, mrudangam is believed to be of ancient origin. It is the primary rhythmic accompaniment in a Carnatic music ensemble, the wood for this instrument is taken from which tree?

Visual Question

This is an annual event that unites Carnatic musicians worldwide. What is it?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:

1. What is his birthday as per the New Style dating system? **Ans: January 4, 1643**
2. The reclusive Newton's famous work was published only after this famous astronomer urged him to do so. **Ans: Edmund Halley**
3. According to Newton, who believed that God had chosen him specifically to interpret the Bible and worked on the Biblical chronology, when will the Apocalypse happen? **Ans: No sooner than 2060**
4. Newton served two brief terms as Member of Parliament for which constituency? **Ans: University of Cambridge**
5. Name the more common term for 'chymistry'.**Ans: Alchemy that concerned with the transmutation of matter, especially converting base metals into gold.**
6. Newton's famous remark forms part of a letter to this fellow scientist about the latter's work on optics. **Ans: Robert Hooke**

Visual: Which Indian Nobel Laureate wrote this commentary explaining what Newton wrote? **Ans: S. Chandrasekhar**

Early Birds: K. N. Viswanathan | Debarati Kar | Sadhan Kumar Panda | Jyotsna Kaushik | Sunil Kannada

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

Mr. A. B. Narangu, Sriramnagar, Taramani, Madras, wants to know the meaning of the idiom 'a square peg in a round hole'.

When you say that someone to a square peg in a round hole, you mean that the 'person is doing something that is not suited to him. There is nothing wrong with the person but what he is asked to do or the position he is in is not congenial to him. A square peg is all right but is out of place in a round hole. The place of a square peg is in a square hole. You can also say 'He is a round peg in a square hole'.

Mr. V. V. S. Sastry, Dilsukhnagar, Hyderabad, wants to know the meaning of 'reputed'.

'Reputed' when used as an adjective means 'generally supposed but with some doubt'.

He is a reputed scholar.

There is no doubt of any kind whatsoever when you say 'He is a scholar of repute'. A scholar of repute means a scholar with a good reputation. You can also say 'He is a man of bad/good evil/repute'. 'Reputed' also means 'reported to' or 'considered as'.

He is reputed to be a big shot in his village.

'Reputedly' means 'according to what people say'.

Reputedly, they are unreliable.

Mr. Brito, Indiranagar, Bangalore, wants to know why we keep on using expressions like 'I'll go and come' or I'll come instead of 'I must go now' or something similar to that.

This has more to do with culture than language. Somehow people in India feel that it is not good to say 'I am going' when they take leave of another. Parents insist on their children saying 'I will come' instead of 'I am going' even when they are going. 'I will come' is an assurance that the going will be temporary and there will be a reunion. 'I'll come again', 'I am coming', are common expressions in most Indian languages for goodbye. It sounds odd when these are translated into English.

Mr. R. Narayanan, Kamaraj Street, Saligramam, Madras, wants to know which of the following is correct: (a) It was I who did it (b) It is me who did it.

'It is I who did it' is used on formal occasions. It is grammatical. On informal occasions 'me' is used instead of 'I'. Usage allows it and it is acceptable when used informally.

Mr. S. Dandaphani, Sullivan Street, Coimbatore, wants to know the meaning of 'tick off'.

'To tick off' means 'to scold'. The teacher ticked him off for copying. 'Ticking off' and 'tickings off' are used as nouns.

He was scolded several times earlier. But these tickings off had no effect on him.

Mr. A. J. S. Kumar writes: "Words like 'fast' which have opposite meanings are termed 'Junus words', after the Roman God "Janus" who had two faces, one in the front and the other in the back. Noah Jacobs in his book Naming-Day in Eden calls them 'turncoat words'."

Thank you, sir, for this information. Some definitions:

Linguistics: The science that hopes one day to understand language but in the meantime helps everybody else to understand language.

Listening Comprehension: A skill that is necessary for the student but optional for the teachers.

Methodology: The scientific study of how language teachers guess their way from course to course; any preferred set of such guesses – Tom McArthur

Published in The Hindu on June 26, 1990

Word of the day

Recalcitrant:

Obstinately defiant of authority, difficult to manage

Synonyms: uncooperative, intractable

Usage: *The school suspended the most recalcitrant students.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/prorecalcitrant

International Phonetic Alphabet: /rəkálsɪtrənt/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Bhasha literatures cross borders

The need to communicate complex ideas and deep knowledge embedded in our *bhasha* to a larger audience is at the core of the New India Translation Fellowship

Preeti Zachariah
BENGALURU

Venkateswar Ramaswamy

Amlan Biswas

N.S. Gundur

Rahul Sarwate

Vivek Shanbhagh

When academician and literary historian Professor N.S. Gundur began thinking about Kannada texts that readers beyond the Kannada world should read, he started by making a list of books. "I ended up deleting most of the titles because they largely spoke to Kannada audience," says Gundur, one of the three recipients of the first edition of the New India Foundation (NIF) Translation Fellowship, which seeks to bring knowledge texts from various Indian languages to English.

One text, however, stayed on the list: DR Nagaraj's *Allamaprabhu Mattu Shaive Pratibhe,* a book posthumously published in 1999. "Its reach is cosmopolitan, but it is written in Kannada," he says of the text, which focuses on the life and teachings of the 12th-century poet and mystic Allama Prabhu, a key figure in Karnataka's revolutionary Vachana movement. "The book is a radical reading of the vachanas," he says. The Vachanas were a product of a literary and social movement that, at once, broke away from several literary and social conventions of the day.

"Nagaraj brings in a lot of other religious and intellectual traditions of premodern India and connects the life of Allama with these traditions," adds Gundur, who currently serves as a Professor in the Department of Studies and Research in English at Tumkur University, Tumakuru (Karnataka). "It is a fascinating study of medieval Kannada literature."

The other winners of the first edition of NIF fellowship are Venkateswar Ramaswamy (literary translator) and Amlan Biswas (statistician) who are translating Nirmal Kumar Bose's Diaries 1946-47 from Bangla and Rahul Sarwate (academician and historian) who is translating Sharad Patil's *Marxvad: Phule-Ambedkarvaad* from Marathi

Conveying complex ideas

This need to communicate these complex ideas and deep knowledge embedded in our *bhasha* texts to a larger audience is at the core of the NIF Translation Fellowship, which recently announced the commencement of applications for the 2nd round to be awarded in 2024. "We do think a lot about translation in India, but it tends to be centred on fiction," says Yauvanika Chopra, Associate Director at the NIF. According to her, the lack of a translation ecosystem in non-fiction could possibly stem from the sheer complexity of the country. "Even from state to state, there are very different levels of awareness about homegrown thinkers because their work, ideas and theories aren't translated into pan-Indian consciousness," she says.

Additionally, as Yauvanika points out, many cultures in India are still largely oral. "If there is no material text, how does one conserve it? "she asks, reiterating that translating non-fiction *is* daunting, something Professor Gundur echoes. He highlights other challenges, in particular ones related to conveying the nuances and intertextuality of regional writing.

"Text is not merely language. There are many voices, forces, ideologies and ideas. How to bring that ecosystem in is the challenge."

And yet, it is very important. "We were thinking about the lack of Indian knowledge tradition and felt that unless we made a concerted effort, they wouldn't organically come into the mainstream," says Yauvanika, delving into the raison d'etre of the translation fellowship. "If we aren't aware of the intellectual traditions in our own languages, that is a crisis. The hope is ambitious...to talk to each other and understand the way other people think," she says.

Applications for this 6-month-long fellowship, which awards a sum of ₹6 lakhs, mentorship and support to translators and writers working on translating texts in 10 Indian languages –Assamese, Bangla, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam, Odia, Tamil and Urdu–to English, will close on December 31.

"The fellowships are not just about the monetary aspect, though it is a very generous fellowship," says Yauvanika. "It is also about how much institutional support we can provide for a career that is so isolated and isolating," she says, adding that NIF also provides editorial and administrative support as well as legal assistance.

A rich language tradition

The translation fellowships will be chosen by a jury that includes both NIF Trustees – political scientist Niraja Jayal Gopal, historian Srinath Raghavan, and entrepreneur Manish Sabharwal – as well as NIF's language expert committee, which comprise eminent scholars, translators and writers, such as Vivek Shanbhag, AR Venkatachalapathy, K.R. Meera and Rana Safvi.

According to Shanbhag, a noted Kannada writer, India has always had a long tradition of knowledge transfer between various *bashas*.

"Most Indians know more than two languages; we go out and converse in a language and come home and speak another," he says. "We keep doing this translation every day without knowing that we are translating. We have this great opportunity because so many languages are alive and living together," he says, drawing a parallel between the subcontinent and Europe, where many languages exist within a small geographical area. "Reading translated texts helps us get to know the literature, culture, and, going a step forward, the knowledge systems created in these languages," he says. "Anyone will enrich their knowledge and experience by knowing the views and other experiences of other people and cultures."

And yes, the translation of these texts into English is important because it expands reach. "Bringing that into English is important because the discussions that you see today, especially in non-fiction, happen in English," says Shanbhag. He is also keen that the knowledge systems within the Indian languages be shared with the world."

"Take, for example, the 12th-century Vachana movement, which rejected caste, possibly the first such movement in the country to do so. "There are so many books, non-fiction writing about this period in Karnataka," he says, pointing out that DR Nagaraj's *Allamaprabhu Mattu Shaive Pratibhe,* which Professor Gundur is translating, is one such text.

"There is a shift in the social and intellectual life of the English language in India," says Professor Gundur, who believes that translating *basha* texts into English can make a significant difference in our appreciation of Indian knowledge systems and social discourse. "It is not merely a fellowship for translation, but a fellowship for research. The idea of translation as research is very fascinating," he says.

To know more, log into https://www.newindiafoundation.org/nif-translation-fellowship

The Legend of Rambo Circus, now in the city

The show boasts a diverse array of entertainment, featuring a total of 22 acts performed by a mix of international artists and talented Indians

Jyoti Harpal
BENGALURU

Stills from Rambo Circus . SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

It began in the 1990s as a tent show, but it has since evolved into a thriving theater production drawing admiration from a vast audience within the country that had previously overlooked circuses.

Diverse performers

The show boasts a diverse array of entertainment, featuring a total of 22 acts performed by a mix of international artists and talented Indians. This collaboration adds a unique and enriching flavor to the spectacle, blending the artistry and skills of performers from different cultural backgrounds into one captivating performance that reached remarkable heights, especially the main clown of the show, Mr. Biju. He's been selected to represent India internationally, marking the first time an Indian clown will showcase the country at the prestigious International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo in Monaco, Europe.

With 30 years of experience as a clown and performances across India, Mr. Biju's commitment to his craft has shaped his present success. Not only does he excel in his role, but he also supports fellow artists financially and aids them in correcting their mistakes.

During Covid era

Rambo Circus had the honor of performing in front of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and numerous other dignitaries, receiving accolades for their exceptional presentations. During the COVID era, they were the sole circus to stage an online show, selling an astounding 55,000 tickets through platforms like BookMyShow and Lakshya Entertainment. Their remarkable feat caught the attention of BBC, which covered their story.

Moreover, their outreach extended beyond traditional venues. They actively engaged with schools, polling children about their experiences with circuses and gauging their interest in witnessing one. The unanimous response was a resounding 'yes.' This proactive approach also led them to perform in clubhouses within apartments and societies, especially during the challenging times of the COVID era. By taking their show to unconventional spaces, they ensured that the joy and wonder of the circus reached diverse audiences, fostering a deep appreciation for this art form across various communities.

International federation

Furthermore, Rambo Circus holds the distinction of being the first circus to join the international federation, Fédération Mondiale du Cirque, known as the World Circus. Additionally, they showcased their talent at 'Hunar Haat,' a show organized by the Minister of Minorities, featuring skilled artists. This involvement spanned a year, covering various regions of India, and their efforts were duly recognized with awards from the Government of Chandigarh.

The 2nd generation Rambo circus owner Sujit Dilip said "All the places we have never been in this world, I would like to go and showcase and represent India, there should be some kind of schools to train this artisan so that they can represent India in international stages across the world. " The Main Clown Mr. Biju mentioned "I want artists from the Indian circus industry to also go abroad and perform, I want Indian Circus Industry to Grow and prosper and more and more people get to see the beauty of this art form."

Rambo Circus is currently happening at St. John's auditorium, Koramangala from December 21 to January 02, 2024

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 26, 1973

CMs' Talks on Karnataka Border May Not be Decisive

Bangalore: The Karnataka Cabinet at a meeting here discussed the Karnataka - Maharashtra boundary dispute in preparation for the meeting of the Chief Ministers of the two States with the Prime Minister in Delhi on December 29.

This is the second time the Cabinet has had a discussion on the issue in two weeks since the outbreak of disturbances in the border areas.

No firm indication was available on the line Mr. Urs will take in the Delhi talks, although the known stand of the Government and the Legislature is that the Mahajan Commission report should be implemented in toto.

The Chief Minister told his cabinet colleagues of the Prime Minister's invitation for talks. While seeking the Ministers' views, the Chief Minister, himself, did not express any view.

Informed quarters said the feeling in the Cabinet was that since the talks in Delhi might primarily be exploratory in character, what was called for was to get an insight into the Prime Minister's mind and the nature of any move on her part to tackle the sensitive issue which had been exacerbating passions all these years on both sides of the border, not to speak of the prestige aspect the dispute has acquired for both the States.

The matter could be discussed again on the Chief Ministers return. Belgaum city, the border centre, for the development of which the Karnataka Government has spent huge sums of money since it was transferred to Karnataka in 1956 is claimed by Maharashtra.

This claim which has been rejected by Karnataka, a position vindicated by the Fazl Ali Commission and subsequently by the Mahajan Commission.

Bhuvan Gowda: 'Bigger than the KGF franchise'

The cinematographer of *Salar* opens up on his lighting and framing techniques for the two-part film, shooting action sequences, and his working chemistry with Prashanth Neel

Vivek MV

Ever since the teaser of *Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire* dropped virtually in July, the period action drama has drawn comparison with *KGF* . *Salaar* is from the makers of *KGF: Chapter 1* and *Chapter 2,* hence natural for people to find similarities between the movies. But, an outright comparison is unfair, says the film's cinematographer Bhuvan Gowda.

" It is too early to say *Salaar* looks like *KGF*. We shot *KGF: Chapter 1,* with a limited budget. But for *Salaar,* there were no budget restrictions. So, our first aim was to increase the scale of the film; we have made it bigger than the *KGF* franchise," says Bhuvan.

Salaar, directed by Prashanth Neel, produced by Hombale Films, released worldwide on December 22. Starring Prabhas and Prithviraj Sukumaran in the lead, the film is a tale of friendship set in the fictional empire of Khansaar. Bhuvan explains how they created the world of Khansaar.

"Prashanth and I do not emphasise much on CGI. After listening to his narration, I sat down with the production designer to get the designs on paper. We bought a 100-acre space at the Ramoji Film City and named it Ramoji 2, and the entire film was shot there. Once we created the geography as per Prashanth's vision, we built the sets," he shares.

The film's lighting resembles *KGF* for its distinctive tone and set-up, and in some scenes, the use of colour seems motivated by popular epic movies like *Dune* or *Mad Max: Fury Road*. "If you feel the tone is similar to *KGF*, then it means it is my signature," says Bhuvan.

"In an intense or raw scene, I opt for contrast lighting. I do not care for the crores spent on the sets. I will highlight my subject (the main performers) and ensure that people's attention does not go to the background, and remains firmly on the actor."

Salaar has big action set pieces and Bhuvan agrees saying, "I love fights when they look natural on-screen, but fans also want to see people flying in the air in action sequences. So we have to cater to that and yet hold on to realism in fights."

He reveals that the interval fight sequence was the toughest to shoot in *Salaar*. "This scene involved 200 people. When a hero takes on so many people, it has to stand out from the rest of the fights. It was physically draining to shoot the massive sequence in hot conditions. I shot it completely handheld. At times, I would get irritated when the director would call for multiple takes," says Bhuvan with a chuckle. "We took 10 days to complete it," he adds.

Lens view (Clockwise from top) Bhuvan Gowda on the sets of 'Salaar', with friend/mentor Prashanth Neel and a still from the movie. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Salaar is a 'mass' film, and the main ingredient to shoot a mass scene is to capture the charisma of your lead star, points out Bhuvan. "The second most important thing is framing. Ever since my photography days, I wanted my frames to stand out from the rest. Even in my films, the elevation and 'mass' scenes are propelled by my unique framing."

Bhuvan thanks Prashanth for playing a massive role in his journey so far. Having come to Bengaluru from a small village in Mandya, Bhuvan did odd jobs before picking up photography. Working as a still photographer in Prashanth's debut *Ugramm* (2014) was the turning point for the cinematographer, who had lost hopes of surviving in the industry.

"Ravi Varman (*Ponniyin Selvan, Indian 2)* was the cinematographer, but he walked out of the project midway due to some reasons. Impressed with my work, Prashanth asked if I could do the cinematography for the film. I was taken aback and asked him if he was sure about it. Our friendship began with a similar taste for lighting and framing. We both learnt filmmaking as we made *Ugramm*. In a way, *Ugramm* was like a school that taught us the tricks of the trade. Prashanth is a democratic director. Anybody on the sets has the right to suggest a change. He will consider it if it convinces him; that is my favourite quality in him."

Unravelling the past The talk will delve into our rich heritage. PTI

Tales from a temple

Staff Reporter

The mystical and historically significant Padmanabha Swamy Temple, which has been a crucial part of Thiruvananthapuram's cultural heritage, will take centerstage at a talk hosted by the Bangalore International Centre on December 26, at 7.30pm.

Aswathi Gouri Lakshmi Bayi, a poet and author, and Githa U Badikillaya, a researcher, educator, and founder-trustee of Destination Heritage, will lead the discussion.

The talk, organised in collaboration with Destination Heritage, aims to shed light on the temple's lesser-known aspects, including the historical bondage of the royals as Dasas, the legal proceedings surrounding the temple, and the aftermath of the Supreme Court verdict.

Destination Heritage has been contributing to the cause through local history walks, talks, and educational programs.

The organisation has conducted 68 webinars over the past 20 months, fostering awareness of India's heritage.

Aswathi, with her roots in the Travancore royal family, has authored 13 books and presented numerous papers on the temple's history.

"Sree Padmanabhaswamy, the Deity of the Travancore dynasty for centuries, was revered by successive monarchs as the sole cause for all the prosperity and good fortune that came by their land. The etymology of this ancient city has all along been closely associated with the Temple as the different names like Syaanandoorapuri, Aanandapuri, Ananthapuri, Ananthasayana Nagari, Thiruvananthapuram and so on.

"It is significant that Sree Padmanabhaswamy was not just the Sthala Devatha (place deity) of Thiruvananthapuram but was accepted as the supreme sovereign of the entire State of Travancore from 1750 onwards.

"Even previously, along with being recognised as a 'mahakshetram,' it appears a claimant to ongoing royal connections," she wrote in *The Hindu* in 2020.

Githa, a multifaceted individual with a PhD in Jaina folklore, brings her expertise as the Founder-Trustee of Destination Heritage and a seasoned researcher.

The talk promises to be a journey into the heart of Thiruvananthapuram's cultural tapestry.

For more information and RSVP, visit bangaloreinternationalcentre.org.

Nut and soy-free tea and coffee

Shilpa Nair Anand

As part of her job as a plant-based nutritionist, Shalu Nijhawan helps people transition to a vegan lifestyle. Coaching them, she learnt that "people were willing to quit eating everything non-vegan but not their *chai* or coffee, which invariably would include dairy. When presented with vegan options such as soy milk or nut-based milk, they said 'it does not give the 'feel' of *chai*!'" It was this common complaint which led the Bengaluru-based vegan to research alternatives for soy and milk extracted from nuts.

Six months of research and development later, she launched Plantyum! soy and nut-free tea and coffee premixes. "I formulated the recipes out of simple ingredients such as coconut, rice, oats and millets used as a milk-replacement. The beverages are rich, creamy and have no artificial additives or preservatives," says the 31-year-old management graduate. If stored properly, the premix can stay for a year.

Her husband's autoimmune disease diagnosis seven years ago turned the family toward veganism. The family was informed that his condition was not curable, and that he would have to live with the disease. The medication, a combination of steroids and painkillers, left the then 31 year-old IT professional obese. Reading up and researching more about it, she learnt that a vegan diet might help manage the condition better. "I researched more, and we converted to veganism. Within a year, my husband lost weight, and his other medical conditions came under control," she says.

Since she was already in the food business, she had been running Cake Cafe in Bengaluru, delving into food was not difficult. She sold her five-year-old business and immersed herself in learning more about the vegan lifestyle and plant-based nutrition. "People do not realise the power of food and nutrition," she adds. Preparing the beverages (tea and coffee) is as simple as emptying the contents of a sachet into a cup, and adding hot water.

The tea premixes were the first products to be launched by Plantyum, in September, 2023. It is available in four variants – ginger, cardamom, fennel and *masala*. The coffee premix was launched in October, and she is looking forward to bringing out hot chocolate and strawberry milkshake premixes. "For the latter, I have used rice and jowar as milk replacements. This is the first time I have used a millet for this purpose, also this is the International Year of the Millets."

The premixes is available on Amazon, and other e-commerce platforms, besides on www.plantyum.in Prices range between ₹229-₹959.

Seeking healthy alternatives Shalu Nijhawan and her products. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

CITYBEATS

Berry bites

ONGOING
Conçu, a pâtisserie and café, has unveiled a seasonal line-up of strawberry specials. The menu includes strawberry and cream triflez, strawberry tarts, strawberry choux buns and chocolate dipped strawberries.
Available at Conçu, Indiranagar for online orders visit concu.in/

Seasonal specials

ONGOING
Dig into these Burmese treats like *baya kyaw hin gyo* (crispy Burmese falafel soup), *ohn-no kauk swe* (Burmese chicken soup), *chin baung chat* (a mix of *gongura* leaves, dried shrimp, and bamboo shoot) and *bazun hin* (king prawns with tomato *masala*, asparagus) to name a few. ₹1700 for two.
On at Societe Rangoon. Call 22273820 for details.

New Year binge

ONGOING
Called the NYE Party, Niro, the city's rooftop bar, announces an extravagant New Year's Eve celebration. The package is priced at ₹6000+ taxes for couples and offers you a party ambience with an unlimited beverage selection and cuisine.
Early bird discount is offered.

Help pilgrims stranded on their way to Sabarimala: HC

The Kerala High Court, at a special sitting, directs TDB and police to provide water and food to pilgrims stranded at various places; it had earlier issued directions for proper crowd management

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Monday directed the Travancore Devaswom Board, police, and motor vehicle authorities to immediately render necessary assistance, including drinking water and food, to Sabarimala pilgrims who are stranded following the holding over of their vehicles *en route* to Sabarimala.

The Bench led by Justice Anil K. Narendran passed the order at a special sitting held on the day of Christmas following reports that pilgrims are stranded as their vehicles had been held over at various places including Kottayam, Pala and Ponkunnam. The court noted that it was a situation where pilgrims had to remain in their vehicles without food and water.

Patient wait: The pilgrims waiting at lower Thirumuttam of Sabarimala temple. LEJU KAMAL

The court observed that if required, the State Police Chief should directly intervene and take steps to provide succour to the pilgrims.

Prior bookings

The police should strictly implement the court's earlier directive that pilgrims who had not made prior bookings should not be allowed to enter Pampa.

The court had earlier issued various directions to ensure that there is proper crowd management at Sannidhanam, Pamba and Nilakkal and also along the trekking path from Pamba to Sannidhanam.

13 injured as vehicle carrying Sabarimala pilgrims overturns

The Hindu Bureau
PATHANAMTHITTA

As many as 13 persons were injured, two of them critically, when a mini bus carrying Sabarimala pilgrims overturned at Nilackal on Monday.

The accident took place around 4.30 a.m. when the bus, carrying the pilgrims from Tamil Nadu, was moving out of a parking ground here and overturned.

The devotees were returning after offering darshan at the hill shrine.

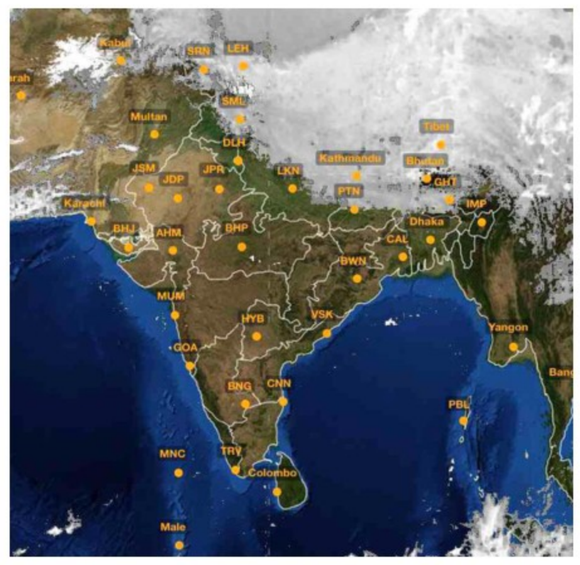
The injured were taken to the Government Medical College, Kottayam.

Meanwhile, the hillock has been witnessing a heavy rush of pilgrims since December 23, prompting the authorities to impose strict crowd-control measures. The pilgrims are now permitted to trek up the hill only in batches. As per estimates, 1.09 lakh devotees visited the Ayyappa temple here on Sunday alone.

In a bid to ease the rush, the police are now regulating the entry of vehicles carrying pilgrims at the various stopover points. Irked over the inordinate delay in commencing their onward journey, devotees have been staging protests. The Pala-Ponkunnam route is facing a major traffic disruption owing to the protests.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Dense to very dense fog very likely in some places over Punjab, Haryana Chandigarh-Delhi; Dense to very dense fog in isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	27.0	15.0	Kozhikode	—	35.0	25.0
Ahmedabad	—	29.0	16.0	Kurnool	—	30.0	17.0
Aizawl	—	22.0	12.0	Lucknow	—	24.0	11.0
Allahabad	—	22.0	12.0	Madurai	—	33.0	22.0
Bengaluru	—	29.0	16.0	Mangaluru	—	34.0	22.0
Bhopal	—	27.0	12.0	Mumbai	—	34.0	21.0
Bhubaneswar	—	28.0	16.0	Mysuru	—	31.0	19.0
Chandigarh	—	24.0	8.0	New Delhi	—	25.0	8.0
Chennai	—	31.0	23.0	Patna	—	28.0	13.0
Coimbatore	0.4	30.0	22.0	Port Blair	—	31.0	26.0
Dehradun	—	24.0	7.0	Puducherry	—	28.0	24.0
Gangtok	—	16.0	8.0	Pune	—	33.0	16.0
Goa	—	34.0	21.0	Raipur	—	27.0	12.0
Guwahati	—	26.0	13.0	Ranchi	—	25.0	12.0
Hubballi	—	32.0	17.0	Shillong	—	18.0	9.0
Hyderabad	—	29.0	16.0	Shimla	—	18.0	9.0
Imphal	8.0	21.0	12.0	Srinagar	—	10.0	-2.0
Jaipur	—	24.0	10.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.0	24.0
Kochi	—	32.0	25.0	Tiruchi	—	32.0	22.0
Kohima	—	17.0	8.0	Vijayawada	—	28.0	19.0
Kolkata	—	26.0	16.0	Visakhapatnam	—	27.0	20.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO₂	NO₂	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	8	14	24	273	145	
Bengaluru	4	31	36	77	110	
Chennai	3	5	26	91	85	
Delhi	15	128	75	423	382	
Hyderabad	9	24	64	273	—	
Kolkata	9	—	53	282	188	
Lucknow	12	39	79	244	177	
Mumbai	19	18	5	264	172	
Pune	119	177	109	298	169	
Visakhapatnam	15	59	48	255	211	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Hanumangarh, Rajasthan recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 387 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Ooty, Tamil Nadu recorded a healthy AQI score of 19

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO₂: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Bad weather disrupts flight schedules in Hyderabad

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Bad weather and poor visibility wreaked havoc with flight schedules at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport on Monday, causing delays to 45 flights and three diversions.

The brunt of the disruptions was felt on busy routes to Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bangalore. IndiGo Airlines faced the majority of the delays, with 31 of its flights affected.

Dispute over Mass mars celebrations in Kerala; St. Mary's Basilica remains closed

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Thousands of Christians of various denominations celebrated Christmas with midnight prayers and Mass.

The dispute in the Syro-Malabar archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly over the style of Mass celebration seeped into the Christmas-eve Mass as a small group of people tried to disrupt the full congregation facing Mass at the St. Thomas' Church, Chittoor.

Archbishop Baselios Cleemis performing Christmas service at St. Mary's Church in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. S. MAHINSHA

Those who tried to disrupt the Mass were later removed by the police as the priest continued the Mass celebration at the church.

The dispute also saw St. Mary's Basilica, seat of the archdiocese, remaining closed for the second year in a row as the vicar and administrator of the basilica said in a circular that there was no peaceful and conducive atmosphere to celebrate Mass at the basilica.

The church was closed on Christmas eve last year following a stand-off between two groups supporting and opposing the synod decision for a unified Mass system.

The group opposed to the uniform Mass claimed that the Mass was celebrated in the traditional full congregation-facing style in 290 of the 328 churches in the archdiocese.

CM to launch 'Aadudam Andhra' sports festival

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will kickstart the 'Aadudam Andhra', sports festival, on Loyola Public School grounds at Nallapadu in Guntur district on Tuesday.

This is the first time the State government is conducting sports competitions from the Village/Ward Secretariat level to the State level, said a press release.

Taking stock: Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha holds a meet with the Collector and other district officials at Sangareddy. MOHD ARIF

'District in-charge' Ministers make a return in Telangana

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

The 'district in-charge Ministers' concept that was dysfunctional in the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government is seemingly seriously pursued now as the new Congress regime in Telangana aims for a focused approach towards governance in each district.

The State government appointed senior Ministers as "district-in-charge Ministers", whose first task would be to review and monitor the implementation of 'Praja Palana activities' in the respective districts.

The Ministers nominated for different districts include N. Uttam Kumar Reddy (Karimnagar); Damodar Rajanarasimha (Mahabubnagar); Komatreddy Venkat Reddy (Khammam); Duddilla Sridhar Babu (Ranga Reddy); Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy (Warangal); Ponnam Prabhakar (Hyderabad); Konda Surekha (Medak); D. Anasuya Seethakka (Adilabad); Thummala Nageswar Rao (Nalgonda); and Jupally Krishna Rao (Nizamabad).

The concept was quite popular and effective during the previous Congress governments with the Ministers regularly reviewing the development works with the MLAs and officials.

Neutral leaders

The district Ministers were seen as neutral persons with regard to development works as politically strong MLAs always tried to take away a major share of funds for their constituencies in their districts.

The government is serious about the district incharge Ministers concept to decentralise the power as well. Apart from the government, the in-charge Ministers also strengthened the party as they were the "go-to persons" for the party workers and leaders.

The previous government faced criticism for ensuring that power was concentrated with a few individuals.

Former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's family was always a target for the Opposition, which claimed many Ministers were almost inoperative with only the family taking all the major decisions.

'Effective delivery of six guarantees duty of administration'

M. Rajeev
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has asserted that it is the responsibility of officials to ensure the effective implementation of policies formulated by the government in the larger interests of the people.

He said it would be the choice of officials to decide whether to go that extra mile for delivering the six guarantees. "If it is difficult to work in the system, inform the Chief Secretary or the DGP. The government has no objection towards transferring [such officials] from their current postings. But, we will have objections if the officials want to continue in their posts without fulfilling the responsibilities expected of them," he said.

The Chief Minister's remarks assume significance in the backdrop of the functioning of the previous government headed by the BRS, during the tenure of which there had been no insistence on the officials to go to the field level to understand the ground realities in the implementation of public assurances.

"Orders of the government must be carried out responsibly," Mr. Revanth Reddy said during a conference of senior officials, district collectors and superintendents of police.

He said his government was "very open-minded" and would take their suggestions.

Protective gear

All set: Health staff outside the COVID isolation ward at King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Monday. Andhra Pradesh Health Department officials have reviewed the State's readiness to handle if there is a surge in cases. K.R. DEEPAK

A.P. tahsildar suspended for 'justifying corruption'

The Hindu Bureau
PUTTAPARTHI

The Andhra Pradesh government has placed Mursha Vali, tahsildar of Madakasira mandal, under suspension after a video 'justifying corrupt practices' surfaced on social media.

In the video, he was narrating his plight to a farmer who came to him to lodge a complaint against a Revenue Officer. Mr. Vali was seen saying that he could not meet the expenses during the visit of Ministers and had to collect money from people like him.

Forest Department issues another notice to HPF's liquidator against auction of land

The Hindu Bureau
UDHAGAMANDALAM

The District Forest Officer (Nilgiris Division) has issued another notice to the liquidator of the Hindustan Photo Films (HPF) Manufacturing Company Limited to cancel the planned auction of 291 acres of land on which the factory stands.

According to Forest Department officials, the liquidator, appointed to recoup some of the losses accrued by the company, had already issued a similar notice on October 12. Opposing the move, the District Forest Officer had issued a show-cause notice asking how the land, which was leased from the Forest Department when the factory was set up, could be auctioned.

No takers: Though an e-auction was held recently, no bids were submitted for the purchase of the land. FILE PHOTO

Though an e-auction was held, no bids were submitted for the purchase of the land.

The HPF factory was set up in the 1960s. At its peak, it employed around 6,000 workers. However, the company witnessed a dip in its fortunes in the 1990s, and was eventually declared bankrupt in 1996. The factory ceased all operations in 2013.

District Forest Officer S. Gowtham said the lease to the land was cancelled by the Collector in 2020, and an order was issued to return it to the Forest Department.

The issue is being taken up by the National Company Law Tribunal and the Madras High Court.

"Meanwhile, to our shock and dismay, a sale notice has been issued again for the sale of leasehold rights of Hindustan Photo Films Manufacturing Co. Ltd," the DFO said in his notice to the liquidator.

He added that the sale notification was issued in violation of the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882, and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. He also called upon the liquidator to withdraw the e-auction notice published on November 28.

The auction has been scheduled for December 28.

Debt debate

IMF's sovereign debt risk assessment for India has spurred a sharp reaction

The Finance Ministry, last Friday, issued a statement titled 'Factual position vis-à-vis IMF's Article IV consultations with India'. For context, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), under its Articles of Agreement, holds bilateral discussions with members, usually every year. IMF staffers collect economic and financial information, and discuss policies with top officials, before preparing a report that is discussed by the Fund's executive board. The Ministry statement, four days after the IMF released its latest India consultation details, noted that "certain presumptions have been made taking into account possible scenarios that does not reflect factual position". In particular, the Ministry was referring to an IMF view that adverse shocks could lift India's general government debt to, or beyond 100% of GDP in the medium-term (by 2027-28). The Ministry asserted this was only a worst-case scenario and not a *fait accompli*, and emphasised that other IMF country reports show much higher extreme 'worst-case' scenarios, for instance, at 160%, 140% and 200% of GDP, for the U.S., the U.K. and China, respectively.

The combined debt of central and State governments stood at 81% of GDP in 2022-23, from 88% in 2020-21. Under favourable circumstances, the IMF reckons this could even go down to 70% by 2027-28. The shocks faced by India so far in this century were global, and affected the entire world economy, be it the 2008 financial crisis or the pandemic, the Ministry pointed out. Reacting to initial news flashes, it further clarified its statement was not a rebuttal to the IMF but "an effort to arrest misinterpretation or misuse" of its comments to imply that General Government debt would exceed 100% of GDP in the medium term. Semantics experts may argue whether the communiqué was confrontational or clarificatory. India's Director on the IMF Board had already placed on record reservations about its staff's conclusions on debt risks ["sounds extreme"], and some other aspects of the economy. In the broader picture, IMF staff's perceptions of India's fiscal position have actually improved over the past year. From arguing in 2022 that India's fiscal space is at risk, they now believe sovereign stress risks are moderate. This is in no small part due to the ability of the Centre, whose debt levels were about 57% of GDP last year, to meet fiscal deficit targets in recent times. Reducing debt and spends to stay the course on its commitment to bring the deficit to 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26 from an estimated 5.9% this year, is critical. While reacting to an adverse detail in a report sometimes ends up drawing more attention to it, actions tend to always speak louder than words.

Carry on, doctor

Doctors must not fear prosecution unless gross negligence is proven

The proverbial slip between the cup and lip was in evidence when the Union Home Minister's assurance on the floor of the Lok Sabha was at variance with the actual amendment on punishment for doctors in cases of death due to negligence. Amit Shah initially said: "If someone died due to medical negligence by doctors it was treated as culpable homicide not amounting to murder. I am bringing an amendment today. Doctors have been exempted from punishment [under this section]. The Indian Medical Association [IMA] had requested us [for the exemption]." The amended Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023, passed since, however did not provide that blanket exemption to doctors. Instead, the amended Section 106(1) specifies that a registered medical practitioner (RMP) shall be punished with imprisonment up to two years and a fine. In effect, the punishment for doctors as specified under Section 304(A) of the Indian Penal Code that the BNSS replaces, has been retained. With the IMA still thanking the government despite the status quo situation, a deft look behind the scenes reveals that a draft Bill submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the issue, actually suggested a seven-year imprisonment term for death due to negligence in case of an RMP. The IMA then submitted to the Standing Committee that there was no *mens rea* or criminal intent in the relationship between the patient and the doctor, and thus the increased punishment was not justified. The committee then reduced the imprisonment to five years, which finally rested at two years, as the law was passed.

It is pertinent to look at the index case that defined guidelines relating to medical negligence – *Jacob Mathew vs State of Punjab & Anr.* (2005). The court held that the negligence should be 'gross', of a significantly high degree, and consequently, criminal liability would come up only if the physician's act can be demonstrated to be negligent or reckless, causing death. Even during prosecution, at various levels, the weight is on the opinion of a similarly qualified expert on whether negligence on the part of the doctor led to death. While it may be argued that doctors thus enjoy adequate protection under the law in the execution of their duties, the reality is that the incidence of violence against medical professionals is indeed increasing. To offer doctors refuge from fear of assault while discharging their duty, and to ensure that any decision made is not clouded or impaired from such fear is important. No one is above the law, but any attempt to demonise doctors for deaths that occur may cause them to hold back from giving patients the best available care. That, under no circumstances, is acceptable.

Article 370 issue closed, but terror victims need closure

R.K. Vij

is a retired Indian Police Service officer

While delivering the judgment on Article 370 of the Constitution, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul of the Supreme Court of India also recommended the constitution of a truth and reconciliation commission to heal the wounds and suffering of the victims of the insurgency that gripped the Kashmir Valley, particularly in 1989-90. Justice Kaul wrote that this may help to 'achieve collective understanding of the human rights' violations perpetrated by State and non-State actors, against people of the region'. Since truth-telling provides an opportunity for victims to narrate their stories which may facilitate an acknowledgement from those responsible for perpetrating the wrongs, and from society as a whole, this may pave the way for reconciliation, he wrote separately in the Epilogue. At the same time, he cautioned that the commission, if constituted, should not turn into a criminal court.

Defining parameters

The purpose of a truth and reconciliation commission is to facilitate the process of reconciliation in societies that are divided during periods of violence and grave human rights abuses. While Uganda had a truth commission constituted (Uganda 1: Commission of Inquiry into Disappearances of People of Uganda, 1974) in 1974 – said to be the world's first – to investigate and report on hundreds of disappearances that occurred during the earlier regime, most of such commissions have been constituted to study the pattern of human rights violations that took place either during an earlier regime or military dictatorship or arising out of insurgency or similar grave acts of violence. Justice Kaul, for instance, referred to the South African truth and reconciliation commission, which was set up to investigate rights violations during the apartheid regime.

Priscilla B. Hayner, known for her expertise on truth commissions and transitional justice, in her book, *Unspeakable Truths: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions*, has delineated the five main characteristics of truth commissions.

First, they focus on the past, rather than ongoing events. Second, a truth commission investigates a pattern of events that took place over a period of time. Third, it engages directly and broadly with the affected population, gathering information on their experiences. Fourth, a truth commission is a temporary body, with the aim of concluding with a final report. Fifth, a truth commission is officially authorised or empowered by the state.

However, truth commissions are known to have also been appointed by the United Nations (such as in Timor-Leste or East Timor) and a non-governmental organisation (NGO) such as the World Council of Churches, in Brazil as well. The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), an NGO established in March 2001 (Hayner is also a founding member) to propagate truth commissions and help to transfer the expertise, is still working in many countries.

> The top court's recommendation of a truth and reconciliation commission to help the victims of the insurgency that gripped the Kashmir Valley must not go unheeded

Therefore, if a truth and reconciliation commission is constituted by the Central government (or authorised by Parliament) to undertake structural investigation of human rights violation in the Kashmir Valley, the parameters need to be defined carefully and clearly. Much will depend on the composition of the commission because it is the members who provide impartiality and objectivity to the pious work they are entrusted with. In South Africa, two members (out of 17) could also be appointed as non-South African commission members.

Caution needed to fix mandate

The most important function of a truth and reconciliation commission is to hold public hearings and record patterns of rights violations, as narrated by the victims as well as by the perpetrators. The South African commission, for instance, had the power to grant amnesty in exchange for full disclosure by applicants. Such a provision could attract controversy in India if applied uniformly to state and non-state actors. Non-state actors in the Valley were terror groups, mostly financed by actors active across the border. Even home-grown terror groups are known to have been brain-washed and trained by them.

But as far as state actors are concerned, levelling imputations against the Indian Army (and/or the Jammu and Kashmir security forces) which have been holding fort since the late 1940s may not go down well with the government, as the Army's presence in the Valley is still required to further normalise the situation. Also, it is important to note that the central government has denied permission in the past to prosecute certain members of the defence forces for alleged offences and rights violations. The Supreme Court of India, in *General Officer Commanding (Army) vs CBI & Anr.* (2012), held that the government's sanction is necessary if there is a 'reasonable nexus' between action and the lawful discharge of duties of the official.

Therefore, while collective understanding of rights violations, perpetrated by state and non-state actors may be necessary – as observed by Justice Kaul – the mandate needs to be chosen carefully without having an adverse impact on the overall credibility of the security forces, including the armed forces.

Determining reparation for victims is one of the essential mandates of a truth and reconciliation commission even if the perpetrators are not identified.

The case of the Kashmiri Pandits

As mentioned by Justice Kaul, the phase of involuntary migration (of Kashmiri Pandits) that took place in 1989-90 due to the second round of insurgency is the one that awaits rightful redress. It is quite understandable that many victims might not be alive to seek closure of their loss and violations. The truth and reconciliation commissions, if constituted immediately after the change of regime or end of hostilities or insurgency, would be most useful in reconciliation and in rebuilding fractured societies. Therefore, the truth and reconciliation commission, even if constituted without further delay, will have only limited utility.

Nevertheless, the victims of rights violations still reserve the right of reparation (recognised even by the UN) which may take all or any of the five forms, i.e., restitution; compensation; rehabilitation; satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition. Restitution includes all measures aimed at re-establishing the original situation before the rights violations happened. Examples include return to one's place of residence or the return of property. This, though it appears to be problematic, is still the most crucial step for most migrants who need to be given a fair chance without further aggravating their agony. Monetary compensation for damages and pension may solve some problems of the poor victims, though the neediest might not be alive to the situation to get due benefits. Rehabilitation could restore reputation and may include legal services if needed. Satisfaction may assume the form of a public apology, commemoration, tribute to victims and so on. The guarantee of a non-repetition may include measures contributing to the prevention of further violations as well as training for armed and other security forces. Despite Jammu and Kashmir being a case of delayed reparation, some relief can still be given to the victims within each parameters given above to rebuild their lives.

The fact remains that the (Kashmiri Pandit) victims of mass exodus, who have roots in the Valley, still feel aggrieved, and need authoritative acknowledgement and closure for the violation of their rights. The chapter of Article 370 of the Constitution has been authoritatively closed by the Supreme Court, but the sufferers of insurgency must also get a rightful closure. Justice Sanjay Kaul, who knew well the limitations of his recommendation, chose to air his views on behalf of all victims, which must not go unheeded.

The views expressed are personal

Global Goal on Adaptation and the road from Dubai

Anwar Sadat

is a senior Assistant Professor in International Law, specialising in environmental law, at the Indian Society of International Law (ISIL), New Delhi

The 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in Dubai, was notable in terms of stopping the lackadaisical approach of the international community to the adaptation concern. Guided by the Paris Agreement on Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), the efforts put in at COP26 and COP27 were what culminated in the adoption of the framework for GGA at COP28. The material progress on the implementation of the GGA requires that future climate change negotiations should show more urgency in treating adaptation on a par with mitigation as the world is witnessing extreme weather events, with devastating consequences. These climate change events are happening at only 1.1° Celsius as compared to pre-industrial levels.

Another fact is that the best mitigation efforts enshrined in the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of the Parties to the Paris Agreement are not in sight of restricting global average temperature below 1.5° C as compared to pre-industrial levels. They would rather nudge the world towards the 2.8° C point by the end of the century.

Challenges in GGA implementation

The framework of the GGA is expected to influence what type of adaptation action will be prioritised. A main target in the GGA includes the Parties to the Paris Agreement having "conducted up-to-date assessments of climate hazards, climate change impacts and exposure to risks and vulnerabilities and have[ing] used the outcomes of these assessments to inform their formulation of national adaptation plans, policy instruments, and planning processes and/or strategies", by 2030.

By 2027, all the Parties have to establish multi-hazard early warning systems, climate information services for risk reduction and systematic observation to support improved climate-related data, information and services. A significant point remains to be answered whether it will advance adaptation. A comprehensive review of experiences from the Millennium Development Goals found that globally agreed goals do not trickle down easily from the global to the national level. National conditions, including administrative capacity and economic development, were identified alongside adequate support as key influencing factors for the implementation of a global goal.

> Implementing GGA needs more urgency in terms of treating adaptation on a par with mitigation in the face of extreme climate events

Measuring GGA

The Parties are expected to have progressed in their implementation of national adaptation plans, policies and strategies by 2030. And, it is not very simple to answer whether progress on adaptation has been made. Unlike mitigation of greenhouse gases, climate adaptation does not have a universal metric, and its ambition or implementation level cannot be simply aggregated based on countries' national pledges. The GGA framework has taken an important decision to launch a two-year work programme on indicators for measuring progress achieved towards the targets mentioned in paragraphs 9-10 of the GGA draft decisions (FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.18). But it does not currently mention who will develop them, or how.

A question that arises is about what the potential role of universal indicators after its finalisation in two-years' time would be. In a global context of scarce public funds and competing priorities, the idea of spending in those adaptation activities would not pose much difficulty if their results can be fairly measured and compared. The idea of developing a standardised metric is one that is being supported by international donors and the national budget managers, which would help them in applying this to all sorts of adaptation projects. This kind of thinking is bolstered by the fact that the most sought-after dimension of climate change problem mitigation is working with one relatively simple and universal metric of CO_2 equivalents, which can be applied across specific contexts to measure impacts in an easily comparable format.

The COP28 Draft Decision notes with concern that the adaptation finance gap is widening, which amounts to highlighting the widening gap between the estimated costs of meeting a given adaptation target and the amount of finance available. The COP26's urge to developed countries to double overall adaptation finance from 2019 levels by 2025 was repeated in the Draft Decision. Estimation made on the basis of updated NDCs or national adaptation plans indicate a figure of $71 billion per year from now to 2030. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have already admitted that their combined mitigation and adaptation finance flows fell short of the annual $100 billion to $83.3 billion in 2020.

Climate financing and mitigation bias

There is also a strong bias in climate financing in favour of mitigation as compared to adaptation.

Here are the reasons: the climate change regime has been largely mitigation centric; rich countries do not gain much as the benefits of adaptation are local, and mitigation projects generate benefits globally and the availability of low-cost mitigation options in developing countries.

Buchner, in a study, said that the split between mitigation and adaptation finance is 95:5 (Climate Policy Initiative, Venice, 2011). Self-reporting made by finance providers indicates there has been a trend of increasing international adaptation finance to developing countries in recent years, reaching $28.6 billion in 2020, but the share of adaptation in total climate finance to developing countries was 34% in 2020, still far behind mitigation finance (Adaptation Gap Report, 2022).

The GGA is an encouraging development as it contains a number of developments that are very useful for the cause of adaptation. But it still falls woefully short in terms of treating adaptation on a par with mitigation as it lays stress on holding the increase in the global average temperature well below 2° C and 1.5° C essential for ensuring the continued availability of the largest number of adaptation options, and also adds greater levels of mitigation that will reduce the need for additional adaptation efforts.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Politics and discourse

The manner in which some Ministers and political leaders are airing their opinions, using uncivilised statements, is a sad reflection of how fine principles in a democratic set-up are vanishing. The political arena has become battlefield and what is distressing is that only the goal, of the next election, is being kept in mind rather than a long-term vision and the future of the next generation. One longs for the return of political maturity, decency, wisdom and sagacity.

R. Pichumani,
Thippirajapuram, Tamil Nadu

Natural calamity insurance

In motor vehicle insurance, third party coverage is collected compulsorily. Though it is not possible to have this for natural calamities in general, a portion of the total revenue of the State and Centre must be reserved for this and disbursed to family card-holders uniformly, irrespective of their income after a calamity, especially in the context of extreme climate events. This must at least be the minimum form of help. Following the Chennai floods, though the line was that all would be covered, there were riders to get the sum of ₹6,000.

R. Ganesan,
Chennai

Corrections & Clarifications

A sentence in the report titled "Cong. MLA disqualified after scam conviction" (December 25, 2023, some editions) read: "...disqualified under provisions of Article 19(1)(e) of the Constitution...." It should have read : "...disqualified under provisions of Article 191(1)(e) of the Constitution...."

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Stabilising frayed ties, yet hurdles ahead

Manoj Joshi

is Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

After the meeting between United States President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, in November, the U.S and China have managed to stabilise their relationship from the free fall it was in through 2023, beginning with the spy balloon episode. The new year could bring new turbulence arising from the outcome of the elections in Taiwan and the fact that it would be an election year in the U.S. where both parties are vying to show how tough they are on Beijing.

One sign of the efforts to manage the relationship without confrontation was visible in the recent virtual meeting between their top military officials, General Charles Q. Brown, and General Liu Zhenli. China broke off military contact following former U.S. Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022.

The U.S. had been seeking such a meeting for a while, but was foiled by the sanctions it had placed on the Chinese Defence Minister, General Li Shangfu, in 2018. With the latter's purge last month, the way opened up for the meeting between the two U.S. and Chinese defence officials and a restoration of the normal dialogue between the two militaries.

Taiwan's polls, tech export

A big challenge could arise almost immediately into the new year arising from the January 13 elections in Taiwan. The candidate of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, Lai Ching-te is leading at the polls, something that China has made clear it does not particularly like. Efforts, no doubt, aided surreptitiously by Beijing, have pushed for a victory of the Opposition which leans towards China, but as of now it seems that the Taiwanese are not likely to change course. Lai is the deputy to the current President Tsai Ing-wen and is likely to keep pushing for Taiwanese sovereignty and partner the U.S. closely.

Another issue that will play out in the year is ever-tightening U.S. restrictions on technology export, especially that of semiconductors to China. Ten days ago, the U.S. Department of Commerce said that it would launch a survey of the U.S. chip supply chain and national industrial base to address national security concerns from China-sourced chips. This process would also aid in the Administration's funding of domestic semiconductor industry

The Chinese Embassy in Washington protested noting that the U.S. had "been stretching the concept of national security, abusing export control measures, engaging in discriminatory and unfair treatment against enterprises of other countries, and politicizing and weaponizing economic and sci-tech issues".

In October, the Biden Administration issued an update to its existing restrictions on exporting advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) to China and other countries. The move was aimed at preventing China from acquiring cutting-edge chips to develop AI technologies such as large language models that power applications such as ChatGPT, but U.S. officials say they also have military uses. To prevent Chinese startups from filling the void in AI chips in China, the U.S. also included two Chinese chip startups, Biren and Moore Threads, to the U.S. blacklist.

In retaliation, Beijing exercised its lever as the supplier of rare earth metals needed for chip production. In July, China placed restrictions on some gallium and germanium products. In December, restrictions were placed on several types of graphites and a ban imposed on the export of technology for making rare earth magnets and technologies for extracting and separating rare earths. China is the world's top processor of rare earths, accounting for 70% of the world's production.

U.S. elections, prospects

But the biggest unknown in U.S.-China relations in 2024 will be the outcome of the U.S. presidential elections and a possible re-election of Donald Trump as President. The Biden policy on China has followed on from the break that was effected by its predecessor Trump Administration.

But many of the tougher measures against China today came in the Biden term. Importantly, Mr. Biden's China policy was more systematic and surefooted. His marshalling of allies such as South Korea and Japan, cementing the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, the U.S.) and creating AUKUS (Australia, the United Kingdom, the U.S.) could not have given the Chinese much geopolitical comfort.

But even so, the return of Mr. Trump could prove to be their worst nightmare given his chaotic persona. Dealing with Mr. Biden and stabilising ties would provide much needed breathing space for the ailing Chinese economy. Mr. Biden had made it clear that he was seeking a managed competition that would prevent confrontation.

Given the nature of the U.S.-China competition, there are also other areas which could unexpectedly gain salience. One of them is growing tensions in the Philippines and China in the South China Sea near the Scarborough Reef and the Second Thomas Shoal. On December 10, the U.S. State Department spokesman said that the U.S. would stand with the Philippines and that the provisions of their mutual defence pact would kick in if there were armed attacks on Philippines armed forces, government vessels and aircraft and even the Coast Guard.

Speaking in Washington DC in mid-December, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, one of the architects of the Biden Administration's China policy, said that the two countries would not be able to resolve all their differences and avoid shocks, but the aim was to make "our communication resilient...[to] prevent misunderstanding from leading to escalation and causing harm".

The U.S and China have managed to stop the free fall in their relationship, but the elections in Taiwan and in the U.S. pose new challenges

The wheels of change in Telangana

The Mahalakshmi free bus travel scheme could greatly improve women's welfare

STATE OF PLAY

Syed Mohammed
syed.mohammed@thehindu.co.in

Soon after coming to power in Telangana, the Congress government set in motion steps to implement one of the six guarantees the party had announced in the run-up to the elections. The Mahalakshmi scheme provides women and transgenders free travel on Telangana State Road Transport Corporation's buses (TSRTC). This could set in motion massive change – better access for women to education, employment and health care. And, at the same time, it can improve the State road transport undertaking's cash flow and also infrastructure. But, only if the government manages to strike the right balance among the elements in the transportation equation.

To begin with, the numbers are quite impressive. In the first 11 days, a staggering three crore women from across the State went by bus, accounting for over 62% of the TSRTC's passengers.

Lady Luck smiled on the TSRTC as its occupancy rose with buses from as many 45 of the 97 depots recording over 100% occupancy. Another parameter that can prove helpful in understanding the previously sluggish if not stagnant occupancy ratios is that ever since zero-fare tickets for women were introduced, occupancy rose from 69% in November, to 88%, an increase of 19%. Given the more than promising response, as well as the festive season of Christmas, New Year and Sankranthi, the TSRTC expects ridership to only increase.

Studies and assessments of similar initiatives implemented in other States and countries have shown how free bus travel for women has led to more savings, and better access to education. A report available on the U.S.'s National Center for Biotechnology Information website links free bus travel to healthier ageing and a reduction in isolation.

Anecdotal evidence

In India, Tamil Nadu, one of the few States apart from Delhi, Punjab and Karnataka to have introduced free bus travel for women before Telangana, recorded that women passengers tended to save up to 12% of their monthly income. The report, released by the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission, has anecdotal evidence to conclude that the scheme has improved access to health-care facilities, and ensured better interactions with fellow passengers.

That being underscored, there are a few hiccups. For instance, while the Mahalakshmi scheme appears to be a hit, many villages remain unconnected to the TSRTC's bus services. According to official data, as many as 1,497 villages in Telangana do not have a service, meaning, women from these villages are yet to become beneficiaries of the Mahalakshmi scheme. For their part, TSRTC officials are of the opinion that with the previous government embarking on "upgrading" thandas (hamlets) to gram panchayats, the number of unconnected villages rose from 844 in 2019 to 1,497. Efforts are underway to have bus services there.

The other, and more pressing, issue appears to be an inadequate number of buses in the State. The problem is chronic. Till October, the TSRTC's fleet strength stood at 9,053, of which 2,733 were hired buses. The Greater Hyderabad Zone, which covers large swathes of the city, and the IT Corridor, had approximately 2,900 buses. In comparison, cities with a similar population, such as Bengaluru, had over 6,000 buses.

The impact of an inadequate fleet is illustrated by the fact that the TSRTC has been having its fair bit of trouble in accommodating zero-fare passengers on the Express buses. As a result, the management has requested women passengers to use the Palle Velugu buses for shorter distance travel.

The zero-fare tickets, much like the different types of bus passes, are treated as reimbursements from the government. Given the high occupancy of women, earnings from these reimbursements are also likely to be in proportion to zero-ticket sales. The TSRTC, which has been grappling with losses due to worker salaries, dues, and high fuel costs could turn profitable, only if these reimbursements are credited by the government on time. The issue is largely connected to cash flows.

Study on impact needed

While the scheme in Telangana is still in its infancy and the initial results seem promising, a better understanding in the Telangana context will emerge if and only when the Congress government or the TSRTC takes up a thorough study of the scheme's impact among women respondents across socio-economic and age groups.

Urban consumer confidence stable, optimism in income levels

In November 2023, over 27% of consumers said their income levels had improved — the highest for any November since 2019

DATA POINT

The Hindu Data Team

Just before the festive season in November, consumer confidence remained stable, according to the November 2023 edition of the Reserve Bank of India's bi-monthly Consumer Confidence Survey. While the pessimism related to the current general economic situation and employment was higher compared to the previous round, it was offset by a positive sentiment on current income. The survey gathers the views of households in relation to the previous year, focusing on the general economic climate, employment conditions, price trends, and individual income and expenditures across 19 major cities. The most recent iteration of this survey took place between November 2 to 11, 2023, with 6,082 participants. Female respondents formed 52.8% of the sample. In November 2023, 33.1% of the respondents said that the general economic situation had improved compared to a year ago (**Chart 1**). This was the highest for any November since 2019. However, it had slipped by three percentage points from 36.1% in September 2023. Levels of pessimism about the economy are also on the decrease. In November 2023, only 44.4% said that the economic situation had worsened compared to a year ago – the lowest for any November since 2017. However, those who felt the economy had worsened continued to be more than those who felt it had improved.

Chart 1 plots respondents' views on the general economic situation compared to the year earlier. In November 2023, 32.3% said job opportunities had improved compared to a year ago. While this is the highest for any November since 2019, it had dropped from 34% in September 2023 and was only marginally higher than 31.8% a year ago (**Chart 2**). Pessimism about job opportunities has also shown a decline. In November 2023, 44.7% said their employment levels had worsened compared to a year ago – the lowest for any November since 2017. **Chart 2** plots respondents' views on the employment situation compared to the year earlier.

In the survey month, 91.3% of respondents said the price levels of commodities had increased compared to a year ago (**Chart 3**). The share of such respondents has been more than 90% since March 2021, or 17 consecutive survey months. The figure was lower when compared to November 2022 (94.9%) and 2021 (95.1%). **Chart 3** plots respondents' views on price levels of commodities compared to the year earlier.

About 27% of the respondents said their income levels had improved compared to a year ago during the survey period (**Chart 4**). The share of such respondents is the highest since July 2019. It is also the highest for any November since 2019. Pessimism about income levels is also decreasing. In November 2023, 22.7% also said their income levels had worsened compared to a year ago – the lowest for any November after 2018. **Chart 4** plots respondents' views on income levels compared to the year earlier.

In November 2023, 74.8% said their spending levels had increased compared to a year ago – at the same level as November 2022 (74.9%). The figure has remained around the same level in all the survey months since the past year. For the second consecutive November, the share of such respondents has persisted above the 70% mark (**Chart 5**).

So, pessimism about the general economic situation, employment opportunities and income levels has shown a declining trend. A higher share of respondents said that income levels have improved. However, a high share of respondents continue to feel that the price level of commodities is higher than a year ago.

Chart 1 | The chart shows the respondents' views on the general economic situation compared to the year earlier

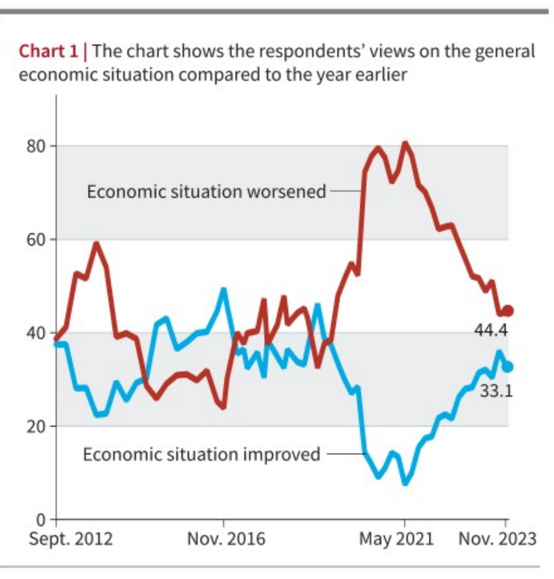


Chart 2 | The chart shows the respondents' views on the current employment situation compared to the year earlier

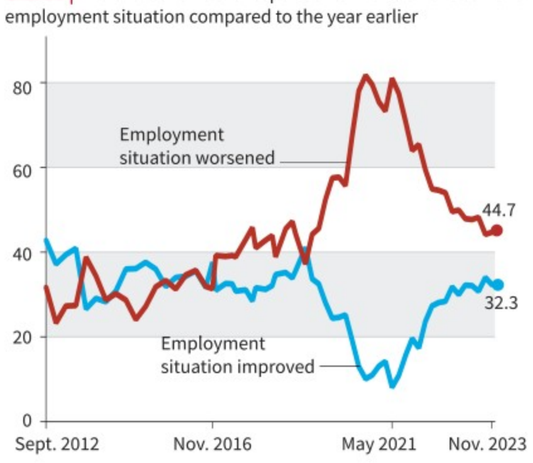


Chart 3 | The chart shows the respondents' views on price levels of commodities compared to the year earlier

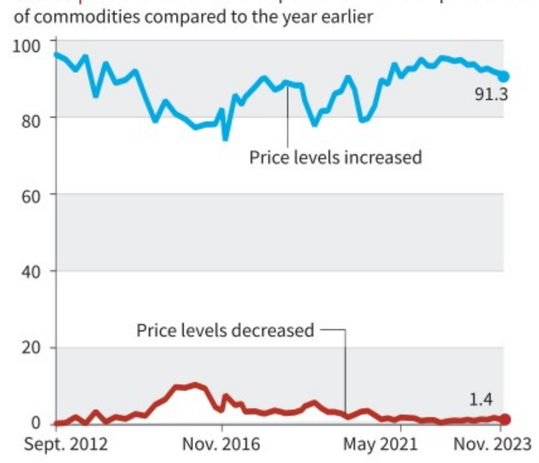


Chart 4 | The chart shows the respondents' views on income levels compared to the year earlier

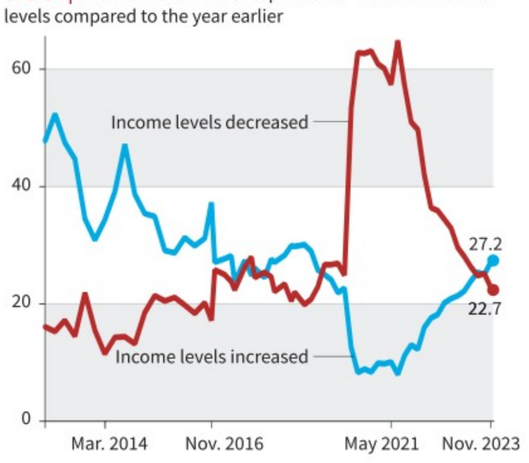
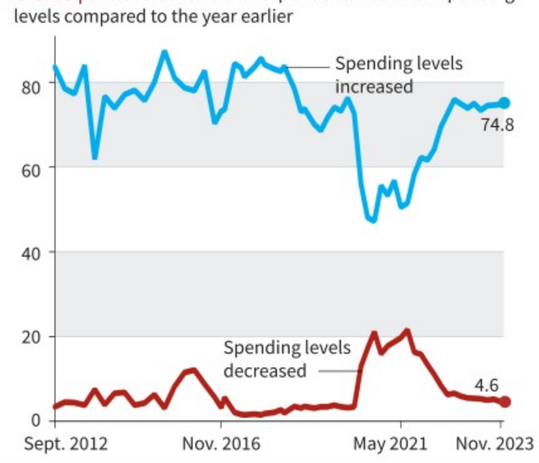


Chart 5 | The chart shows the respondents' views on spending levels compared to the year earlier



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 26, 1973

Arabs to Reduce Oil Cut

KUWAIT, Dec. 25.
Arab oil-producing countries handed a surprise Christmas present to the world's industrial nations to-day when they announced they would start stepping up oil production again and ease restrictions on exports.
The Ministers of nine countries said in a statement issued after hours of talks here that subject to certain conditions they would export oil to "friendly" countries, "according to their actual needs."
They also declared they would raise their production of oil by 10 per cent in January, in relation to the output before the outbreak of the October war between the Arabs and Israelis.
They had originally planned to cut production by a further 5 per cent in January to a total of 30 per cent under their policy of tightening the oil squeeze until their demand for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories was met.
In a further gesture of conciliation, they also admitted Japan in the ranks of countries who are given favoured treatment by being excluded from some of the regular monthly cuts.
But the total oil embargo on the United States and Holland imposed because of their alleged pro-Israeli position is to stay.
The announcement of a reversal of the progressive production cuts came as a total surprise. At their previous meeting here, just two weeks ago, the Arab Oil Ministers had tied any such action firmly to progressive Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands under U.S. guarantees.
Sheikh Yamani Saudi Arabian Oil Minister, said the Ministers decided not to subject Belgium to any reduction of its oil imports via Holland, provided there are guarantees that such imports arrive in Belgium intact.
Asked whether the oil embargo against the US would not be lifted for the time being, he said, "We appreciate the US trend, but it is not enough to lift the embargo."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO DECEMBER 26, 1923

The Frontier.

(ASSOCIATED PRESS OF INDIA)
DELHI, Dec. 25.
According to advice received from Frontier, Afghan troops are now in the village of Mandalai, Sangu Khel country (Afghanistan) in connection with operations against Kohat and Landi Kotal murderers and Afridi tribesmen are cooperating to prevent the escape of the gangs into Tirah. Operations are still proceeding.

From Page One

Jaishankar arrives in Russia on 5-day visit

"The full-format negotiations between the heads of Russian and Indian Foreign Affairs Ministries are scheduled on 27 December," Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Maria Zakharova said on Monday, indicating the Lavrov-Jaishankar meeting on Wednesday, which would be followed by a joint press conference by the Foreign Ministers.

The meeting between the Ministers on Wednesday will cap a year of several meetings as Mr. Lavrov travelled to India for the G-20 Foreign Ministers' meeting in March, SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting in May and then represented Mr. Putin at the G-20 Summit in Delhi in September this year. Mr. Jaishankar last visited Moscow in November 2022 to prepare for Mr. Modi's visit there for the annual summit, which was then put off.

Payment issue

Speaking to the media during his visit to Delhi for the G-20 summit, Mr. Lavrov had conceded that issues over the payment mechanism between India and Russia, being devised to circumvent the U.S. and EU sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine war, had not yet been resolved.

This has meant delayed payments, as well as the need for India to use third-country currencies, including the UAE Dirham and Chinese Yuan to pay for Indian imports from Russia that have grown a massive 368% year on year from 2022 to 2023, mainly due to an increase in import of Russian oil, leading to a major trade deficit. In addition, Russia's supply of the fourth and fifth regiment of the S-400 Triumf Air Defence Systems, also under U.S. sanctions, have been delayed and are now expected in 2024.

Apart from bilateral issues, Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Lavrov are expected to discuss the conflicts in Ukraine, as well as Israel's continued bombardment of Gaza.

While Russia has been openly critical of Israel's actions, and in particular, the U.S.'s support to Israel over the bombing of civilians, India's stand has been less strident. India abstained in one vote at the UNGA in October that was critical of Israel, before joining a majority of the international community in UNGA votes calling for a ceasefire this month. India's decision to not join the U.S.-led naval operation against Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, named "Operation Prosperity Guardian" so far is also likely to find favour in Moscow.

Speaking in the Russian Parliament on December 13, Mr. Lavrov had said "relations of special and privileged strategic partnership with India are progressively advancing," and that India was among countries of the Global South along with China that Russia had most "focussed" on.

Mr. Putin had also praised Mr. Modi at a recent public event for refusing to be "frightened, intimidated or forced to take any actions, steps, decisions that would be at variance with the national interests of India and the Indian people."

China offers consular aid to arrested Vivo staff

"The Chinese Embassy and consulates in India will continue to provide consular protection and assistance to the individuals concerned in accordance with the law," she said.

"The Chinese government firmly supports Chinese businesses in safeguarding their lawful rights and interests. We hope that India will fully recognise the mutually beneficial nature of the business cooperation between our two countries and provide a fair, just, transparent and non-discriminatory business environment," she said.

Interim CEO of Vivo-India Hong Xuquan, aka Terry, a Chinese national; chief financial officer Harinder Dahiya and consultant Hemant Munjal have been taken into custody under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The federal agency had earlier made four arrests in the case which included mobile company Lava International's MD Hari Om Rai, Chinese national Guangwen, aka Andrew Kuang, and chartered accountants Nitin Garg and Rajan Malik. They are currently in judicial custody.

Aircraft grounded in France's Vatry airport leaves for India

Plane with 303 passengers, mostly Indians, was grounded by authorities on December 21 over concerns of undocumented immigration; reports in local media had said some of the 'passengers initially did not want to return to their country'

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

All clear: Crew members board the plane grounded by the police for a human trafficking investigation at the Vatry airport in eastern France on Monday. AP

An aircraft with 303 passengers, mostly Indian citizens, that was detained by the French authorities on December 21 over alleged concerns of undocumented immigration was allowed to return to India on Monday, the Embassy of India in Paris announced.

"[We] thank French government and Vatry Airport for quick resolution of the situation enabling Indian passengers to return home and hospitality. Also for working closely with embassy team, present throughout at the site to ensure welfare and smooth and safe return," the Indian embassy in Paris stated in an announcement declaring that the aircraft belonging to Romanian Legend Airlines was cleared to return to India.

The aircraft, an Airbus A-340, had landed for a technical halt at the Vatry airport, located approximately 160 km away from the French capital on Thursday when an anonymous tip-off had prompted the French government to stop the aircraft from taking off.

The aircraft was stranded at the Vatry airport amid reports that the French authorities had interrogated several passengers as well as the crew belonging to Legend Airlines as it was indicated that some of the passengers wanted the aircraft to be flown to Nicaragua.

Liberal policy

Initial reports had revealed that the aircraft had taken off with the Indian nationals from Dubai for Nicaragua in central America, which has adopted a liberal immigration policy that has started a major wave of possible illegal immigration to north America. Nicaragua does not have an embassy in India but has honorary Consuls-General. Its diplomatic affairs with India are managed by the Nicaraguan embassy in Tokyo which is concurrently accredited to India.

According to the protocol division of the Ministry of External Affairs, Vivek Burman is the Honorary Consul-General of Nicaragua in New Delhi. Mr. Burman is better known for being a leading figure in Dabur.

At the time of writing this report, the aircraft had taken off from France and was scheduled to reach Mumbai on Tuesday morning.

Earlier, reports quoting French local media had stated that departure of the aircraft was delayed as some of the passengers initially did not want to return to their country of origin. Reports also said nearly four dozen passengers had filed asylum applications.

The airline's lawyer, Liliana Bakayoko, was quoted as saying that the "situation was for a while confusing". "We are very relieved. We were impatiently waiting for this."

According to the French media, some of the passengers spoke Hindi and others Tamil. After authorising the plane to leave, the French judges on Sunday chose to cancel the hearings of the passengers due to irregularities in the procedure. The passengers include a 21-month-old child and 11 unaccompanied minors.

According to the *Le Monde* newspaper, two passengers were however not authorised to leave and may face charges. The Public Prosecutor's Office had specified that a judicial investigation has been opened for aiding the illegal entry and stay of foreigners in the territory "as part of an organised gang and participation in a criminal association".

The airline's lawyer has denied any involvement in the trafficking. A "partner" company that chartered the plane was responsible for verifying the identity documents of each passenger, and communicated the passengers' passport information to the airline 48 hours before the flight, Ms. Bakayoko has said.
(With PTI inputs)

Four arrested for murder of gangster in Mumbai

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Mumbai Police on Monday arrested four persons in connection with the murder of a gangster, Sumit Yerunkar, in the Chunabhatti area of the city on Sunday. The police are on the lookout for a fifth accused in the case.

The police said 21 bullets were fired in the shootout on Sunday afternoon that led to the death of Yerunkar. Four people, including an eight-year-old girl, were also injured in the firing. They are undergoing treatment at Sion Hospital, where their condition is said to be stable.

The four accused – Sunny Patil, Sagar Sawant, Naresh Patel, Ashutosh Gavan, all residents of Chunabhatti – were produced before a court, which sent them to police custody till January 5.

The police said Yerunkar and Patil worked together earlier, but became rivals over time. It was due to previous animosity that Patil decided to take revenge, the police said.

Yerunkar was arrested in 2016 for opening fire inside the office of Arihant Builders. He was acquitted earlier this year.

There are at least four more cases registered against him, the police said.

Initial assessment of *Chem Pluto* indicates a drone attack, says Navy

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Bits and pieces: Debris from suspected drone attack found inside *Chem Pluto* after it was anchored off Mumbai on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Merchant vessel *Chem Pluto* that was hit by a projectile reached Mumbai on Monday and the preliminary assessment of the area of attack and the debris found on the ship by the explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) team point towards a drone attack, the Navy said.

"However, further forensic and technical analysis will be required to establish the vector of attack, including type and amount of explosive used," the Navy said in a statement. A joint investigation by various agencies has commenced on completion of the analysis by the Navy's EOD.

'Serious concern'

Pointing to the seriousness of the incident, an official with knowledge of the matter said the nature of attack was of serious concern and if the impact was elsewhere, it could have resulted in a huge explosion on the ship. The vessel reached Mumbai and was anchored safely at outer anchorage off Mumbai at 3.30 p.m. for initial inspection. *m.v. Chem Pluto,* with 22 crew members (21 Indians and one Vietnamese national) was located around 217 nautical miles from the Porbandar coast in the Arabian Sea when it was hit on Saturday.

The ship has been cleared for further operation by her company-in-charge at Mumbai.

The ship is scheduled to undergo mandatory checks by the various inspecting authorities before undertaking ship-to-ship (STS) transfer of cargo, the Navy said.

This is likely to be followed by docking and repairs of the damaged portion.

Meanwhile, both the Navy and the Coast Guard have stepped up patrolling in the general area. Considering the recent spate of attacks in the Arabian Sea, the Navy has deployed guided missile destroyers *INS Mormugao*, *INS Kochi,* and *INS Kolkata* in various areas "to maintain a deterrent presence", it stated.

Long-range maritime reconnaissance P8I aircraft are also being regularly tasked to maintain domain awareness.

Army detained a few youth for questioning, 3 of them died: FIR

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The first information report (FIR) filed in the alleged custodial death in the Poonch-Rajouri sector said that in the aftermath of the terror incident on December 21, the Army troops detained a few youth for questioning and three of them died of injuries and "as such a cognisable offence under Section 302 of IPC is made out".

The FIR has been filed by the Surankote police station against "unknown" persons. Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code pertains to murder.

The FIR accessed by *The Hindu* said that around 5.25 p.m. on December 22, "information made available to this police station in the aftermath of the terror incident near DKG (Dera ki Gali) on 21-12-2023, Army troops were carrying out searches in the general areas of Topi Peer, Sawni and Buffliaz to locate the terrorists who escaped after the attack. During such searches, Army troops detained a few local youth for questioning".

It added that three youth, Safeer Hussain, Mohammed Showkat, and Shabir Ahmad, all residents of Topi Buffliaz, Tehsil Surankote, died of injuries.

"As such a cognisable offence under Section 302 of IPC is made out. On this information instant case stands registered. As the instant case is of special nature which is third of its kind from the said village and third of its kind during the current year, whereas 41st case of special nature of current year, Special report-A will be submitted separately and investigation will be taken up," the FIR said.

The lone Gujjar MP in Jammu and Kashmir said on Monday that the cause of death of the three men who were alleged to have been killed in the Army's custody on December 22 will be known after the inquiry is concluded.

'Professional force'

Gulam Ali, who was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2022, said that the Indian Army was a professional force.

"The Union Territory administration has announced compensation and jobs to the next of kin of the deceased. We have a professional Army, they oblige human rights, they have said they will cooperate in inquiry. Poonch-Rajouri has a tough terrain," Mr. Ali said.

The three men, along with five others belonging to the tribal Gujjar Bakkarwal community, were picked up by the Army for questioning after an Army convoy was ambushed by terrorists on December 21. They were found dead with multiple injuries.

A 29-second video of Army jawans stripping the three men and putting chilli powder on them was circulated on social media, leading to public outrage. Internet services have been suspended in Poonch-Rajouri for the past four days while security forces are conducting search operations to locate and identify the terrorists involved in the killing of the four soldiers.

Meanwhile, the four soldiers were cremated with honours at their native places. The mortal remains of Naik Birendra Singh and rifleman Gautam Kumar, residents of Chamoli and Kotdwar in Uttarakhand, arrived at the Jolly Grant Airport, Dehradun on Monday.

The last rites of Naik Karan Kumar from Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh and rifleman Chandan Kumar from Nawada in Bihar were also conducted.

NewsClick's HR head moves court seeking to turn approver

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Amit Chakraborty has claimed he had material information that he was willing to disclose to the Delhi Police

The head of the human resources department of *NewsClick*, Amit Chakraborty, has moved a Delhi court seeking its permission to turn an approver in the case lodged under anti-terror law UAPA over allegations that the news portal received money to spread pro-China propaganda, court sources said.

Mr. Chakraborty moved the application before Special Judge Hardeep Kaur last week, seeking pardon in the case and claiming he had material information that he was willing to disclose to the Delhi Police, which is investigating the matter. The judge has posted the matter before a magisterial court for recording Mr. Chakraborty's statement.

According to police sources, the agency will take a decision on whether to support his application before the court after going through his statement.

The Special Cell of Delhi Police arrested Mr. Chakravarty and the news portal's founder and editor-in-chief, Prabir Purkayastha, on October 3. They are currently in judicial custody.

According to the FIR, a large amount of funds to the news portal came from China to "disrupt the sovereignty of India". It also alleged Mr. Purkayastha conspired with a group – People's Alliance for Democracy and Secularism– to sabotage the electoral process during the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Bengal Governor may move HC against JU convocation

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose is likely to approach the Calcutta High Court against the "unauthorised convocation" at Jadavpur University on Sunday.

The convocation was held despite the Governor sacking Interim Vice-Chancellor Buddhadeb Sau.

"It is reliably learnt that Chancellor of State-aided universities in West Bengal, C.V. Ananda Bose, has received legal advice to move a writ of *quo warranto* in the Calcutta High Court against the unauthorised convocation in Jadavpur University, flouting the law of the land and judgments of the Supreme Court," a Raj Bhavan source told *The Hindu*.

According to the legal experts consulted by the Raj Bhavan, the writ of *quo warranto* will lie against the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Amitava Dutta, who gave the degrees to the students.

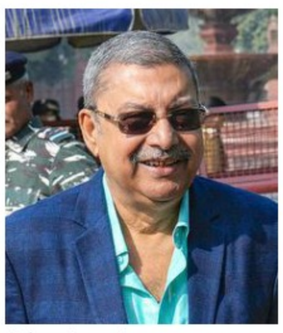
Mr. Bose had on Saturday (December 23) issued orders for the removal of Professor Sau but the West Bengal Education Department asked the Interim Vice-Chancellor to maintain status quo and conduct the convocation as per schedule.

The Raj Bhavan sources also pointed out that as per law the government had no role in the universities, including holding of convocation. "In the present case, the government sanctioned holding of the convocation overriding the authority of the Chancellor," the sources said.

After the convocation on Sunday, the Interim Vice-Chancellor told press-persons that he had acted on the recommendations of the university court.

Dhankhar throttling Opposition's voice, says Trinamool MP

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA


Kalyan Banerjee

Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee on Monday once again hit out at Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, and asked him how much he wanted to please Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"How much will you bend? How much do you want to please Narendra Modi and the BJP that you are throttling the voice of the Opposition?" the Trinamool Congress MP asked at a public meeting at Serampore in Hooghly district on Monday.

The MP, who was in the eye of a storm over his mimicry of the Vice-President on the premises of Parliament, has over the past few days targeted Mr. Dhankhar again.

"Holding a constitutional post, he is only saying me and me. We cannot comprehend this," Mr. Banerjee, also a senior advocate, said at the gathering.

He said the right to expression was a fundamental right and mimicry was an art of expression. He had mimicked Mr. Dhankhar during the Opposition's protest on the stairs of Parliament House on December 19 against the suspension of MPs.

'Great respect'

As his action drew condemnation and with Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee not coming to his defence, Mr. Banerjee on December 20 said he had the highest regard for Mr. Dhankhar.

I [have] highest personal regard for Dhankhar *ji*. I did not have any intention to hurt the Hon'ble Rajya Sabha Chairman. I have great respect for all Constitutional posts, he had said on social media.

Mass suspension of MPs was premeditated: Kharge

Congress chief was responding to Rajya Sabha Chairman's letter stressing need to move ahead; he held Dhankhar, as the presiding officer, responsible for the Centre escaping all accountability

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Hitting back: Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge speaking at a stir in New Delhi against the suspension of Opposition MPs. FILE PHOTO

Declining Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar's invitation to meet him on Monday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, who is away from Delhi, said in a letter that the mass suspension of MPs was "premeditated" and "weaponised" by the BJP to sabotage parliamentary practices.

Mr. Kharge was replying to a second letter written by Mr. Dhankhar on Saturday inviting him for the meeting saying "we need to move ahead". In the letter, Mr. Dhankhar said the parliamentary disorder was "deliberate and strategised".

While agreeing with the Chairman on the need to move ahead, Mr. Kharge said that a discussion in his chamber would not resolve the problem "if the government is not keen on running the House".

Responding to Mr. Dhankhar's allegations, Mr. Kharge said the suspensions were executed "without any application of mind", pointing to the suspension of a DMK MP who was not present in Parliament.

"You have also mentioned that disorder was deliberate and strategised and predetermined. I would like to submit that if anything, it is the mass suspension of the Opposition MPs from both Houses of Parliament that seems to be predetermined and premeditated by the government," Mr. Kharge said.

Mr. Kharge held Mr. Dhankhar, as the presiding officer, responsible for the government "escaping all accountability".

'Disappointing move'

"It would be distressing when history judges the presiding officers harshly for Bills passed without debate and not seeking accountability from the government. It is disappointing that the Hon'ble Chairman feels effecting suspensions facilitated legislative business by passing Bills without discussion," he wrote.

The Opposition, Mr. Kharge argued, had moved multiple notices seeking a statement from Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the security breach.

"I recognise it is well within your powers as Chairman to decide on these notices. However, it was regrettable that the Chair condoned the attitude of the Hon'ble Home Minister and the government who did not wish to make a statement on the floor of the House," Mr. Kharge said.

The Congress president pointed out that while Mr. Shah did not speak in the House, he spoke to a television channel on the subject while Parliament was in session.

Mr. Kharge wondered why the Chair did not find that as sacrilege to the temple of democracy.

Mohan Yadav expands his Cabinet, 28 Ministers take oath in Madhya Pradesh

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Governor Mangubhai Patel administering oath to Ministers, during the swearing-in ceremony in Bhopal on Monday. A.M. FARUQUI

Twenty-eight BJP MLAs on Monday took oath as Ministers in the Madhya Pradesh government as Chief Minister Mohan Yadav expanded his Cabinet.

Eighteen MLAs, including former Union Minister Prahlad Singh Patel, BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, and former Lok Sabha member Rakesh Singh, took oath as Cabinet Ministers; six as Ministers of State (Independent Charge); and four as Ministers of State.

Portfolio soon

The portfolio distribution to the new Ministers is expected to be done in a few days.

Mr. Patel and Mr. Singh were among the seven Lok Sabha members who were fielded by the BJP as part of its collective leadership strategy in the Assembly election held in November.

The other prominent names in the Cabinet are Pradyumna Singh Tomar, Tulsiram Silawat, Aidal Singh Kansana, Govind Singh Rajput (all four had switched over from the Congress with Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia in 2020), Vishvas Sarang and Sampatia Uikey.

The oath to the new Ministers was administered by Governor Mangubhai Patel at a ceremony held at the Raj Bhavan in Bhopal.

Eye on LS polls

The BJP's strategy of making decisions keeping an eye on the 2024 Lok Sabha election reflected in the Cabinet expansion too as the party inducted at least 11 Ministers from the Other Backward Classes (OBC), which makes up more than half of Madhya Pradesh's population.

Six MLAs from the Scheduled Castes (SC) and four from the Scheduled Tribes (ST) also took oath as Ministers. Seven Ministers belong to the general category. Five women Ministers, including Ms. Uikey and Nirmala Bhuria (both Cabinet Ministers and tribal leaders), also featured in the list.

With the Chief Minister and two Deputy Chief Ministers, the total strength of the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet has now reached 31, against the maximum strength of 35.

Modi hosts Christmas event, says shared values will take country forward

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Merry day: Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a Christmas event with the members of the Christian community on Monday. ANI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday emphasised that the shared values of the Bible and the Upanishads will take the country forward in the spirit of cooperation. He was speaking at a meeting with prominent members of the Christian community on Christmas at his official residence, 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, in New Delhi.

In what is a first such celebration of Christmas at Mr. Modi's official residence during his tenure, he said that Jesus Christ's life message was centred on compassion and service and he worked for an inclusive society where justice was for all.

Among those present included Bishop Paul Swaroop; Bishop Thomas Mar Antonios; Cardinal Oswald Gracias; Archbishop Anil Couto; John Verghese, Principal of St. Stephen's College; Alexander George, managing director of the Muthoot group; Alukkas Joy Verghese, who is chairperson of the Joyalukkas group; athlete Anju Bobby George; actor Dino Morea; Kevin J. Kimtis, second secretary at Embassy of The Holy See Vatican; and Bishop Simon John.

Meeting the Pope

Speaking about meeting Pope Francis, Mr. Modi said that "it was a moment that left a lasting impression" on him.

Mr. Modi said the spirit of service and the pursuit of truth as enshrined in the Bible echoed the Upanishads, considered the fount of Hindu philosophy. "People can focus on their shared values and heritage to move forward, and the spirit of cooperation and coordination, coupled with the spirit of '*sabka prayas*', can take the country to new heights," Mr. Modi said.

He spoke highly of the contribution of the Christian community, especially for its role in giving direction to society and sense of service.

Mr. Modi said Christians have always been at the forefront of serving the poor and deprived. The institutions run by the community in the health and education sectors continue to make big contribution across the country, he said.

Not upset or angry with INDIA bloc, says Nitish

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

> Why would I be upset or angry? It was my effort to bring all the Opposition parties together for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. I have always been saying that I don't have any personal ambition
>
> **NITISH KUMAR**
> Bihar Chief Minister

Bihar Chief Minister and Janata Dal(U) leader Nitish Kumar on Monday said he was not upset during the recent meeting of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) in New Delhi.

Mr. Kumar reiterated that he had no personal ambition and was only interested in uniting the Opposition parties ahead of the Lok Sabha election in 2024. He rubbished claims made by the BJP that there was a split in the JD(U).

After the fourth meeting of the INDIA bloc, there was talk in political circles that Mr. Kumar was upset after not being offered a post in the alliance – convener or co-coordinator – and that was the possible reason for his not being present at the joint press conference after the meeting.

"News of being upset is absolutely wrong. Why would I be upset or angry? It was my effort to bring all the Opposition parties together so that we can fight against BJP in the Lok Sabha polls in 2024. I have always been saying that I don't have any personal ambition," Mr. Kumar said after attending a State event in Patna, organised to pay tributes to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 99th birth anniversary.

Mr. Kumar said he never had any desire for any post, stressing that he had already said everyone should contest elections together and the work on seat-sharing should be done as soon as possible.

This is not the first time that such rumours have spread about Mr. Kumar.

'We are united'

When asked about claims of a possible split in the JD (U), Mr. Kumar said, "It is all useless. My party is united and we are working for the upcoming elections. Who can break my party? We are totally united."

After the INDIA bloc meeting, senior BJP leader from Bihar and Rajya Sabha member Sushil Kumar Modi had said that JD(U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh would be replaced soon. Reacting to the BJP leader's claim, Mr. Kumar said, "I do not pay attention to who says what. Nowadays people keep saying whatever comes to their mind for their own benefit. No one is going to get any benefit. Everyone is united in our party and there is no problem. We all are working together. Someone has control over the media people but I respect the media and will always do so. Our party and 'INDIA' alliance are united."

Accompanied by several State Cabinet Ministers, including Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav, at the tribute function, the Bihar Chief Minister said he had good relations with Vajpayee.

"When his [Vajpayee] government was formed, he gave me the responsibility of three departments and he respected me a lot. Atal*ji* has a big contribution in making me the Chief Minister. I have always had respect for him," Mr. Kumar said.

INBRIEF

Telecommunications Act gets Presidential assent

President Droupadi Murmu has signed the Telecommunications Act, 2023, the Centre's long-discussed successor to the Telegraph Act of 1885 that has till now governed telecom services in India. Following the assent, rules to enact different Sections of the Act will be required. The Act largely leaves telecommunications law intact, while formalising certain practices such as reserving spectrum bands for different purposes and instituting dispute resolution measures for conflicts between licensed service providers and the government. It provides for newer ways for telecom operators to obtain permissions to set up their equipment in different States.

President Murmu gives assent to new criminal justice Bills

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday gave her assent to the three new criminal justice Bills, which were cleared by Parliament last week. These new laws – the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act – will replace the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, while replying to the debate in Parliament, had said the new laws focus on delivering justice instead of handing down punishment. The three laws seek to overhaul the criminal justice system by giving definition of various offences and their punishments.

Jagannath Temple in Puri to have special force for security

With the number of devotees seeking *darshan* at the Shri Jagannath Temple in Puri going over 50,000 every day after the pandemic, the Odisha government has decided to come up with a special force for security and crowd management at the temple. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has approved the creation of a special security battalion which will have 1,190 personnel. "The special battalion for the world-famous Shri Jagannath Temple has been envisioned and conceptualised to render foolproof security, better facilitation of the devotees, and crowd management measures," it said on Monday. "The anticipated flow of devotees is likely to witness substantial increase after the dedication of the new Heritage Corridor Project," a source said.

Maharashtra Minister tests positive for COVID-19

Amid a re-emergence of COVID-19 cases, Maharashtra Agriculture Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar) faction leader Dhananjay Munde has tested positive for the virus, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said on Monday. The Deputy Chief Minister, however, said there was no cause for panic. "One of my Cabinet colleagues, Dhananjay Munde, has tested positive for COVID-19. However, the administration is taking care in the State and necessary instructions to check its spread have been given to officials," said Mr. Pawar, speaking in Pune. While Mr. Munde's office confirmed that the Minister had tested positive for the virus, the details of whether or not it was the new virus variant JN.1 was not disclosed.

KMF Karnataka Co-Operative Milk Producers' Federation Limited
KMF Complex, Dr. M. H. Marigowda Road, DRC Post, Bangalore-560 029.
Tel: 080-25536625 / 26096834, e-mail : engg@kmf.coop

IFT No: KMF/ENGG/HAVEMUL_MEGA_DAIRY/ETP_WORKS/2023-24 Date: 21-12-2023

TENDER NOTIFICATION
[TWO COVER SYSTEM] [THROUGH KARNATAKA PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY]

Karnataka Milk Federation Ltd; Bengaluru invites tenders from the eligible ETP Turnkey contractors/ suppliers / manufacturers & any other eligible companies who have executed similar kind of works may participate in the tender as indicated below, by logging on to website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in and also contact Help desk E-mail: hphelpdesk.blr@intarvo.com, support@eprochelpdesk.com and helpline no. +91-8046010000, +91-8068948777, 080-22230960, 080-22234115

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Tender Quantity	EMD (Rs.)	Completion Period
1	Design, Fabrication, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning Of ETP System Equipments, Machineries Along With Piping, Electrial Etc. along with Carrying Out The Civil Works For Establishment Of 1 LLPD Capacity Effluent Treatment Plant On Turnkey Basis For New Mega Dairy At Arabagonda Village, Byadagi Taluk, Haveri District For HAVEMUL	1 Job	4,50,000/-	8 Months

1) Tender schedules may be downloaded from dated **26-12-2023 to 16-01-2024 up to 4.00 pm.** 2) Pre Bid Meeting on date: **30-12-2023 at 12.00 pm.** 3) Last date for Tender submission on date: **16-01-2024 up to 4.00 pm** 4) Tender [Part 1] to be opened on date: **17-01-2024 at 4.30 pm**. Any Modifications / changes in the Bid Document / Tender Specification / Tender Schedule will be uploaded in KPP Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** Only.

For Karnataka Co-Op. Milk Federation Ltd.,
Sd/- Director [Engineering]-1

INBRIEF

Shimla Winter Carnival brings tourists to Himachal Pradesh

The Himachal Pradesh government's initiative to roll out the first-ever "Shimla Winter Carnival" is expected to give a fillip to the tourism sector, which has suffered badly since a relentless monsoon brought the hill State to its knees this year. "This carnival is a historic moment for the city as it aims to boost tourism activities. The recent monsoon fury had adversely affected State's tourism sector, but due to the government's efforts, it has recovered from this setback," said Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, while inaugurating the 12-day festival on Monday. The event started with a cultural parade and a *Mahanati* (folk dance) performance presented by 450 women from self-help groups.

Service, not power, at centre of good governance: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said his government follows the principle of good governance that has got public service, not power, at its centre. Releasing the first series of 11 volumes of collected works of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya at a function in New Delhi, Mr. Modi said his government is setting up institutions committed towards nation-building, just like "nation first" was supreme for *Mahamana*, a title often used for the Banaras Hindu University founder. He said several institutions of national and international importance being set up today give a new direction not only to India, but the world. PTI

PT instructors come within definition of teachers: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that physical training instructors (PTIs) come within the definition of "teachers" though they may not necessarily take classes within the four walls of a building.

Physical training instructors impart to students the skills and rules of various sports and games.

"Merely because a PTI/Sports Officer is not expected to conduct classes within the four walls of a college, as in the case of a Professor/Associate Professor/Assistant Professor, would not by itself make him ineligible for being treated as a teacher for all practical purposes inasmuch as most sports require training in open spaces/fields/courts etc," a Bench headed by Justice Hima Kohli said.

The Bench was hearing the case of a sports officer/PTI at Jawaharlal Nehru Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya (university). He was challenging the university's demand to retire him at 60 years of age. He had sought parity with the other teaching faculty whose age of superannuation was 62.

The top court upheld the case of the sports instructor.

Govt. plans to issue documents to tribal people in one week

The Centre estimates there are over 22,000 villages where 28 lakh PVTG people reside; it plans to offer 11 schemes under PM-JANMAN package

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister announced the package on November 15 and the Cabinet cleared a ₹24,000-crore expenditure. BISWARANJAN ROUT

Kicking off the campaign for the PM-JANMAN package for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) on Monday, the Union government has set a target of one week to issue Aadhaar and caste certificates and open Jan Dhan accounts across 15,000 habitations of these groups in 100 districts.

The Tribal Affairs Ministry said on Monday that the campaign would cover 100 districts of 18 States and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar; in the next phase, habitations in other parts of the country would be covered.

In the absence of data on PVTG populations, the government has estimated that there are over 22,000 such habitations and villages, where around 28 lakh people live.

The package brings together 11 key schemes, such as those for *pucca* homes, energisation of households, road and telecom connectivity, being implemented by nine Ministries, and plans saturation coverage in these PVTG habitations.

The respective ministries have already started conducting baseline surveys for the schemes they are supposed to focus towards PVTG villages.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the package on November 15 and the Cabinet cleared a ₹24,000-crore expenditure on it over three years within days. However, weeks later, at a government session on December 15, it was revealed that to proceed with any aspect of the package, they would first need to ensure all intended PVTG beneficiaries are provided with documentation such as Aadhaar, caste certificates and Jan Dhan accounts – essential to sign them up for benefits . "Based on this needs assessment, a nationwide IEC campaign will be operational from December 25," a statement said. In a detailed action plan put together for the High-Powered Committee (comprising Cabinet Ministers of nine Ministries concerned) under the package, it was pointed out that PVTG families in these areas do not have basic form of documentation.

Modi to take part in *Veer Baal Divas* programme today

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in a programme on Tuesday to pay homage to the courage and martyrdom of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th and last Sikh 'Guru'.

The Union government has organised many participative programmes across the country to mark the day which has been named "*Veer Baal Divas*". A digital exhibition detailing the life story and sacrifice of the 'Sahibzades' (martyred sons of Guru Gobind Singh) will also be displayed in schools and childcare institutions across the country.

Flag off march-past

Mr. Modi will participate in the special programme at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi and will flag off a march-past by youth.

The programmes being organised by the government will focus on informing and educating the citizens, especially the young children, about the story of the exemplary courage of the '*Sahibzades*'.

There are numerous online competitions such as interactive quizzes which are being organised through MYBharat and MyGov portals.

A film on '*Veer Baal Divas*' will also be screened nationwide, an official statement said.

Veer Baal Diwas

The Prime Minister on January 9, 2022, announced the observation of "*Veer Baal Divas*", to mark the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's sons Sahibzadas Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji.

On the first *Veer Baal Divas* in 2022, Mr. Modi said it would remind the nation that age did not matter when it came to extreme valour and sacrifice.

"*Veer Baal Divas* will tell us what is India and its identity and every year, *Veer Bal Divas* will inspire us to recognise our past and make our future. This will also remind everyone about the strength of our young generation", he said.

Railway officers to be given training in disaster management; academy to offer programme

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Ministry of Railways has made training in disaster management mandatory for railway officers. The move comes after an investigation into the devastating Odisha train tragedy, which left about 290 passengers dead and scores injured, revealed that the disaster response could have been faster.

Way forward: The decision comes after the Odisha train tragedy which killed 290 people and left scores injured. BISWARANJAN ROUT

Disaster management has now been incorporated as an integral component of the training module for railway officers at the induction/foundation course level and also included in refresher or mid-career training programmes. The National Academy of Indian Railways (NAIR), Vadodara, and the Indian Railway Institute of Disaster Management (IRIDM), Bengaluru, would work together in imparting the comprehensive training programme, railway sources said on Monday.

However, with the Railway Board ordering NAIR to hand over all its assets, including buildings and other infrastructure, to the Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV), confusion prevails among the Directors-General and Directors of Central Training Institutes (CTIs) on the implementation of the training.

"NAIR which was functioning from a 43.5-acre campus with customised infrastructural facilities designed and developed over the years has been instructed to hand over the assets to a Central university [GSV]. Any training programme would from now on require the approval of the Vice-Chancellor of the university. Since disaster management is a priority area, there needs to be clarity on the venue and schedule of training," a senior railway officer, who formerly headed a CTI, said.

More emphasis on disaster management was laid following the report of the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Eastern Circle, A.M Chowdhary, who probed the Odisha train accident and said in his findings that "the initial response to such a disaster should be faster. Railway Board should review the system of disaster response in the Zonal Railways."

He also called for reviewing the coordination of railways with disaster management agencies such as the National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force. The Indian Railways have a Safety Organisation and an officer in a higher administrative grade designated as the Principal Chief Safety Officer in all Zonal Railways to ensure compliance of safety guidelines and coordinate with different agencies in the event of an exigency.

Though the Railways have accident relief trains stationed at major junctions across the railway network with adequate manpower and equipment to reach accident sites or any scene of disturbance, the focus would be more on restoring rail traffic.

In the recent floods in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, the Tiruchendur-Chennai Chendur Superfast Express was stopped at the Srivaikuntam railway station after the railway track got breached a few hundred metres ahead.

UNHCR thanks India for taking care 142 Rohingyas intercepted in Andaman

Press Trust of India
PORT BLAIR

> UNHCR thanks the Indian Coast Guard and the authorities for saving desperate human lives. This noble act of humanity brings relief to those in distress
>
> **BABAR BALOCH**
> Spokesperson of UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Monday expressed gratitude to Indian authorities on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for taking care of 142 Rohingya refugees, whose boat was intercepted by coastal security agencies near Shaheed Dweep a day ago.

"UNHCR thanks the Indian Coast Guard and the authorities for saving desperate human lives. This noble act of humanity brings relief to those in distress," Babar Baloch, spokesperson for Asia and the Pacific, said in a text message.

The boat left from Bangladesh 14 to 15 days ago and was on its way to Indonesia. Those aboard included 47 women and 59 minors.

Call to control room

On Sunday morning, the Port Blair police control room received a call from the local intelligence about suspicious boat movement near Shaheed Dweep (previously known as Neil Island), and multiple coastal security agencies (including the Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Police) swung into action and located it, officials had said.

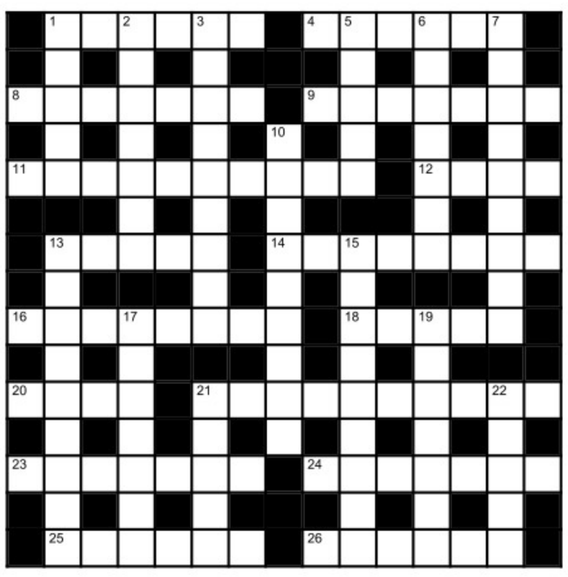
"There are reports of deaths (referring to dangerous sea routes taken by the Rohingyas in the last couple of years). We express our sadness and regret for the lives lost during this ordeal. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stands ready to extend support as needed to those disembarked," Baloch said. The boat was towed to Shaheed Dweep by the marine police on Sunday, as it developed some technical snag and was unfit for further journey, police said. All of them were taken to Port Blair and kept in a temporary shelter by the local administration.

TH CROSSWORD + 14055

(set by Bruno)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Brit, oddly, wearing hat with zero passion (6)
4 Pieces of cubes, often, can be found around liquor (6)
8 Southern Ossetia's leader caught between peace organizations with daughter is weak (7)
9 Guts of soldier to sleep on a road! (7)
11 Annoy old lover with separate arrangement (10)
12 Liberal black couple (4)
13 Virtues lacking tangible limits - that can be harmful (5)
14 Tailored suit - a boy's set (8)
16 One that worships a procrastinator? (8)
18 Ditch absconding leader and expel (5)
20 That might be delivered by personnel to office (4)
21 Dedicate one's coins - mainly gathered on box (10)
23 Devil spilled cold ink (3,4)
24 Poison's name shown in serene mantra (7)
25 One might blow off steam randomly. (6)
26 Export aluminium-containing door (6)

Down

1 Student in University had unknown operating system (5)
2 Mario's enemy carried river-surfing accessory (7)
3 Surprisingly, TED talks finally covered interior kitchenware (6,3)
5 Artist is starting to expect higher salary (5)
6 Second monster disowning God for 2D (7)
7 Tough lineman's no good? (9)
10 Bad actors grunt sadly, being at a loss (9)
13 "Give blood freely" - seen on YouTube? (5,4)
15 Article on one in Paris followed by leaders in Toulouse and Orleans, moreover (9)
17 New city vacated following recent delay (7)
19 Sincere listener's home (7)
21 Hiding place for money for auditors (5)
22 Monster from LOTR prowling back of Rivendell (5)

SUDOKU

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		9	7					6
	7						8	
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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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N	■	T	■	A	■	R	■	L	■	E	■	E	■	W
D	E	M	U	R	■	T	R	I	A	T	H	L	O	N
L	■	A	■	O	■	E	■	N	■	O	■	L	■	I
E	P	S	I	L	O	N	■	■	S	E	A	S	O	N

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	8	7	6	2	9	1	4	3
3	9	2	1	7	4	6	8	5
6	1	4	5	3	8	9	2	7
2	4	5	3	6	7	8	9	1
1	6	9	2	8	5	7	3	4
8	7	3	4	9	1	2	5	6
4	2	1	9	5	6	3	7	8
7	3	6	8	4	2	5	1	9
9	5	8	7	1	3	4	6	2

FAITH

Yudishthira-Yaksha dialogue

The dialogue between Yudishthira and a Yaksha (a clan in devas), popularly known as "Yaksha Prasna" in the Vanaparva of the Mahabharatha, contains valuable information and guidance. The Yaksha asked roughly 125 questions with philosophical and metaphysical ramifications. Thirukudandhai Dr. Venkatesh narrated in a discourse about four questions relating to human life and prosperity.

To the question on which is the soul of a human being came the reply that a son or a daughter is a person's soul (*Athmavai puthra namaasi*). One of the meanings of atma is "to obtain". A son or a daughter fulfil their parents' unachieved desires or goals.

Who does God gift the best friend to a person? A person's wife is reckoned as the best friend because she not only extends her help in exigencies but also takes part in the comfort and grief of her husband (*Bharya daiva kruthaam sakha*).

On what do human beings rely most for their sustenance? Yudishthira answered that people depend on rain. Man cannot naturally produce rain but can preserve it by creating lakes and ponds. God showers his rain-like grace and saves us. It has been in practice to ask "whether it rained"? to enquire about the well-being of the people.

INBRIEF

'Climate-resilient wheat seeds planted in over 60% of area'

After facing loss due to terminal heatwave last year, more farmers are cultivating climate-resilient wheat varieties which has been sown in more than 60% of the planted area of 30.86 million hectare so far, Agriculture Commissioner P. K. Singh said. Wheat is the main winter crop. "We have exceeded the target as heat-resistant varieties have been sown in more than 60% of the cropped area so far. Last year, these varieties were sown only in 45% of the area," he said. PTI

Adani Green signs 1,799 MW solar power PPA with SECI

Adani Green Energy Ltd. (AGEL), a renewable energy company, has executed a power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) to supply 1,799 MW of solar power. "With the signing of this balance PPA, AGEL has completed power offtake tie-up for the entire 8,000 MW manufacturing-linked solar tender awarded to it by SECI in June 2020," the company said in a statement. With this, Adani Green now has tied up PPAs of 19.8 GW and balance is merchant capacity in its 20.6 GW locked-in portfolio, the company said.

Aurobindo's Eugia unit gets 10 U.S. FDA observations

A new injectable facility of Aurobindo Pharma's step-down subsidiary Eugia US Manufacturing LLC in New Jersey, U.S., has been issued 10 observations by the United States Food and Drug Administration (U.S. FDA) after a pre-approval inspection. "The observations are procedural in nature and will be responded to within the stipulated time. The plant is yet to start commercial operations," the drugmaker said in a filing on Sunday.

India-ASEAN to rejig 15-year trade pact in early 2024

India's trade deficit with the region was $7.5 billion annually when the pact was implemented; this has ballooned to $43.57 billion in FY23; negotiations will attempt to bridge this trade gap

Amiti Sen
NEW DELHI

India and the ten-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) will begin negotiations in February to "modernise" their decade-and-a-half-old free trade agreement (FTA) to bring more balance in the pact currently weighed against New Delhi. But new areas like labour, environment, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and gender, are likely to be kept out, sources have said.

"There will be a complete re-look at the FTA with the broad objective of bringing down the trade deficit for India. We want to modernise the FTA as a lot has evolved since it was signed almost 15 years back. New elements such as product specific rules and trade remedies will be brought in to make the FTA more efficient," a source told *businessline*, not wishing to be identified.

The first round of negotiations for reviewing the FTA, officially known as the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITGA), will be on February 18-19 in New Delhi, the source said. Negotiations will follow a quarterly schedule aiming to wrap them up by 2025.

India has long been pressing for a review of the AITGA, which was signed in August 2009 and implemented in January the following year, as the pact resulted in disproportionate benefits for the ASEAN.

Impactful pact: New elements such as product specific rules, trade remedies will be introduced to make the FTA more efficient. ANI

The 10-member ASEAN region accounted for 11.3% of India's global trade in 2022-23

Trade deficit

India's trade deficit with the region was at $7.5 billion per annum when the pact was implemented. This has ballooned to $43.57 billion in FY23. In 2022-23, India's exports to the region were valued at $44 billion, while its imports were at $87.57 billion.

"The Commerce Department has collected inputs from various sectors on tariff and non tariff barriers faced by them in the ASEAN. Market access for Indian businesses has to go up by addressing both areas," the source said.

Sectors that need propping up include chemicals and alloys, plastics and rubber, minerals, leather, textiles, gems and jewellery, per an industry analysis.

"India will also need to make some concessions for the ASEAN as the review will have to benefit both, but the objective of bringing balance has to be central," an industry official also seeking anonimity added.

Revamping AITGA

Modernising the AITGA will include incorporating changes in the Rules of Origin (ROO), which can work in favour of India by increasing market access for some items as well as blocking possible re-routing of goods by China through the ASEAN countries, the source added.

ROO are the criteria to determine the origin of a product and establish if it qualifies for duty cuts under an FTA.

"PSRs will be introduced in the ROO chapter which can help India relax rules for certain items to increase exports. At the same time, loopholes could be blocked to check circumvention by China," the source explained.

The modernised AITGA will also have a chapter on trade remedies, which will seek to provide a safety net for domestic industry against unfair trade practices or unforeseen surges in imports of goods, he added.

But no new areas, such as environment, labour, MSMEs or gender, will be added to the AITGA. "We do not want to complicate the free trade pact by cluttering it with new issues. The focus will be on making the existing pact more efficient," the official said.

The 10-member ASEAN, which includes Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, accounted for 11.3% of India's global trade in 2022-23.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

Risk of stagflation receding: RBI officials

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials believe the risk of stagflation – a portmanteau of economic stagnation with high inflation – has lowered further to 1% compared with 3% in August based on data.

In the first approach, stagflation risk was assessed based on phases of lower economic growth coinciding with high inflation. The second approach used the 'at-risk' frameworks viz. "Inflation at Risk" (IaR) and "Growth at Risk" (GaR) by employing quantile regression to assess the likelihood of stagflation.

"Based on data spanning from Q1:1996-97 to Q2:2023-24, empirical findings suggest supply-side shocks such as spikes in commodity prices coupled with tighter financial conditions and relatively higher depreciation of the domestic currency turn out to be the major determinants of stagflation risk in India," wrote Deba Prasad Rath, Silu Muduli and Himani Shekhar in the latest edition of the RBI Bulletin.

"Elevated risks of stagflation were experienced during specific episodes like the Asian Crisis, the Global Financial Crisis, the taper tantrum, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Latest estimates, incorporating data up to Q2:2023-24, however, assign a very low probability of only 1% to the risk of stagflation," they wrote.

In August, the RBI officials had stated the risk of stagflation was with a probability of 3% with easing of financial conditions, stability of rupee/U.S. dollar exchange rate and steady domestic fuel prices.

Destabilising factor

Stating stagflation had the potential to destabilise the entire macroeconomic framework of an economy by creating an environment of uncertainty, they said it was a major concern for the RBI as it was entrusted with the primary objective of maintaining price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth requiring constant monitoring of any stagflation risk.

Further, higher commodity prices and the appreciation of the U.S. dollar post-pandemic raised concerns of stagflation globally. The delays in the monetary-normalisation process after the pandemic have also raised concerns about the potential for a costly stagflation, they observed.

"Similar results after using the integrated IaR and GaR frameworks to evaluate the stagflation risks adds further credence to our findings. However, given the weak pass-through of crude oil prices to domestic petrol and diesel prices, it has limited predictive power for stagflation.

"Given the focus of central banks on maintaining price stability and healthier financial positions of financial institutions, the long-term inflation expectations have largely remained well-anchored to the inflation target unlike during the 1970s when inflation expectations were weakly-anchored and went to exorbitantly high levels."

RIL's stand-alone and consolidated net gap doubles in 3 years

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The gap between Reliance Industries Ltd.'s (RIL) standalone and consolidated net profit has more than doubled to ₹22,400 crore in the last couple of years, as the retail and telecom businesses housed in separate subsidiaries saw significant growth, a report said.

"The gap... has increased significantly from ₹8,400 crore in FY20 to ₹22,400 crore in FY23, as telecom and retail have ramped up," JP Morgan said in a note that used data from the firm's annual reports to reconcile the difference between two reported profit numbers.

RIL reported a standalone net of ₹30,902 crore in FY20, which grew to ₹44,205 crore in FY23. Consolidated net soared from ₹39,354 crore in FY20 to ₹66,702 crore in FY23.

As many as 335 individual standalone companies/associates/joint ventures accounted for the difference between Reliance's consolidated and standalone PAT for the year FY23. Around 40% of these (133) reported profits for the year. This breadth of companies is down from 498, as part of consolidated accounts in FY20.

Centre likely to miss disinvestment target yet again in FY 2024

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Out of the budgeted amount of ₹51,000 crore in FY 24 20%, or, ₹10,049 crore has been collected so far

With general elections on the horizon, the government's privatisation efforts has all but stalled as it opts for minority stake sales on stock exchanges over outright privatisation, wary of being accused of selling family silver.

The result - the disinvestment target for the current fiscal year is again likely to be missed.

Big ticket privatisation plans like Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) and CONCOR are already on the backburner and analysts feel meaningful privatisation can happen only after April/May general elections.

In the current fiscal, out of the budgeted amount of ₹51,000 crore, about 20% or ₹10,049 crore has been collected through minority stake sales via IPO (Initial Public Offering) and OFS (Offer For Sale).

Sale of a host of Central Public Sector Enterprises including SCI, NMDC Steel Ltd., BEML, HLL Lifecare and IDBI Bank, are in the pipeline for completion in the current fiscal, but invitations for financial bids has been delayed.

'Education loans surged by a record 20.6% in April-October of FY 2024'

G. Naga Sridhar
HYDERABAD

Education loans registered a record year-on-year growth of 20.6% at ₹1,10,715 crore in the current financial year till October, as per the RBI.

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, spurt in such loans was the highest in the last five years. The growth registered in the comparable period was 12.3% FY23 and (-) 3.1% in FY22.

The increase in demand was driven by many factors. "Low base and revival of offline campus courses in India as well as abroad has been driving the fresh as well as pent up demand for education loans," Bibekananda Panda, Senior Economist, State Bank of India told *businessline*.

For the last one year, foreign education loans with an average ticket size of ₹40-₹60 lakh accounted for almost 65% of foreign education loans. Moreover, the recent action by the RBI in tightening the credit to some of the retail segments by raising risk weights for banks as well as NBFCs have spared education loans. "This may support the flow of credit to the sector in the forthcoming months," he added.

U.S. tops

Enquiries with banks showed loans for education in the U.S. are on the higher side. The U.S. Embassy and its consulates in India issued a record 1.4 lakh student visas between October 2022 and September this year.

"A good number of these admissions are supported by education loans, which also pushed up the portfolio for banks," said a senior official of Union Bank of India. The hassle free loan application and disbursal process is also driving the growth. NBFCs are also quite active in the segment. As per data of rating agencies, education loans of NBFCs doubled in FY23 over FY22.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

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MOSCOW

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny moved to a penal colony in Arctic

AP

Jailed Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny has been moved to a penal colony in the Arctic, allies said on Monday after over two weeks during which his whereabouts were unknown. The move comes three months before a presidential vote that is expected to easily hand Vladimir Putin a fifth term. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistani police free 290 Baloch activists arrested during protests

AP

The Pakistani police freed 290 Baloch activists arrested for holding a protest against forced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in the militancy-ravaged southwest in Islamabad. The police use of force against the protesters had sparked anger among Baluchistan residents and drew condemnation from human rights activists. AP

MOSCOW

Russia says it has seized the town of Maryinka in eastern Ukraine

REUTERS

Russia took over the town of Maryinka in eastern Ukraine, which President Vladimir Putin hailed as a "success" that would mean less shelling on the nearby Russian-held city of Donetsk. "Our assault units have today completely liberated Maryinka," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told Mr. Putin in a meeting. AFP

BOKKOS

At least 113 people killed in series of attacks on villages in Nigeria

AP

More than a hundred people have been killed in central Nigeria in a series of attacks on villages, local government officials said. Military gangs, locally called bandits, launched well-coordinated attacks in no fewer than 20 different communities. "We found more than 300 wounded people," the officials said. AFP

Israeli strike in Syria kills senior Iranian official

Reuters
BEIRUT

An Israeli air strike outside the Syrian capital Damascus on Monday killed a senior adviser in Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

The adviser, known as Sayyed Razi Mousavi, was responsible for coordinating the military alliance between Syria and Iran.

Iran's state television interrupted its regular news broadcast to announce that Mousavi had been killed, describing him as one of the Guards' oldest advisers in Syria.

It said he had been "among those accompanying Qassem Soleimani," the head of the Guards' elite Quds Force, who was killed in a U.S. drone attack in Iraq in 2020.

Israel has for years carried out attacks against what it has described as Iran-linked targets in Syria.

Israeli air strikes kill 100 in one of war's deadliest nights

At least 70, mostly women and children, killed in strikes targeting Magazhi after Israel steps up air and ground shelling in central Gaza; another strike in Khan Younis in southern Gaza kills 23

Reuters
CAIRO/GAZA/JERUSALEM

At a funeral in Gaza on Monday a line of Palestinians touched white shrouds containing the bodies of at least 70 people who Palestinian health officials said were killed by an Israeli air strike targeting Maghazi in the centre of the besieged strip.

It followed one of the enclave's deadliest nights in the 11-week-old battle between Israel and Hamas.

Strikes that began hours before midnight persisted into Monday. Palestinian media said Israel stepped up air and ground shelling in central Gaza.

Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qidra said many of those killed at Maghazi were women and children.

Mayhem unleashed: Men recover the body of a victim killed in the overnight Israeli strike at al-Maghazi refugee camp on Monday. AFP

Eight others were killed as Israeli planes and tanks carried out dozens of air strikes on houses and roads in nearby al-Bureij and al-Nusseirat, health officials said.

Medics said an Israeli air strike in Khan Younis in southern Gaza killed 23, bringing total Palestinian fatalities overnight to more than 100.

Several residents made pleas on social media for people to afford them shelter as they have become homeless after leaving their homes in Bureij.

"I have 60 people in the house, people who arrived at my house believing that central Gaza area was safe. Now we are searching for a place to get to," said Odeh, a resident of the refugee camps.

The Israeli Army said it was reviewing the report of a Maghazi incident and was committed to minimising harm to civilians.

Clergy cancels events

Clergy cancelled celebrations in Bethlehem, the Israeli-occupied Palestinian West Bank city where Christian tradition says Jesus was born in a stable 2,000 years ago.

Palestinian Christians held a candle-lit Christmas vigil in Bethlehem with hymns and prayers for peace in Gaza, instead of the usual celebrations.

Egypt floats ambitious plan to end Israel-Hamas war

Associated Press
CAIRO

Falling short: The proposal would appear not to meet Israel's insistence on keeping military control over the Gaza Strip. AP

Egypt has put forward an ambitious, initial proposal to end the Israel-Hamas war with a ceasefire, a phased hostage release and the creation of a Palestinian government of experts who would administer the Gaza Strip and occupied West Bank, a senior Egyptian official and a European diplomat said on Monday.

The proposal, worked out with the Gulf nation of Qatar, has been presented to Israel, Hamas, the U.S. and European governments but still appeared preliminary. It falls short of Israel's professed goal of outright crushing Hamas and would appear not to meet Israel's insistence on keeping military control over Gaza for an extended period after the war.

Israel's War Cabinet, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, will meet later on Monday to discuss the hostage situation, among other topics, an Israeli official said, but would not say if they would discuss the Egyptian proposal. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to talk to the media.

The Egyptian proposal was an ambitious bid not only to end the war but also to lay out a plan for the day after.

It calls for an initial ceasefire of up to two weeks during which Palestinian militants would free 40 to 50 hostages, in return for the release of 120-150 Palestinians from Israeli prisons, the Egyptian official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity.

At the same time, negotiations would continue on extending the ceasefire and the release of more hostages held by Palestinian militants, he said.

Serbians take to the streets over poll fraud as Russia claims Western hand in protests

Agence France-Presse
BELGRADE

Protesters on Monday launched the first of several announced road blocks in Belgrade over alleged electoral fraud in Serbia's recent parliamentary and local elections.

The protesters, mainly students organised under the "Borba" (Fight) movement, were supporting the outcry from the Opposition that started on December 18th, a day after the elections. They were calling for a revision of the electoral list, claiming that it was the source of the alleged electoral fraud.

President Aleksandar Vucic claims there is evidence that the protest was planned in advance

The allegations led to continuous protests in front of Serbia's electoral commission building lasting several days.

President Aleksandar Vucic meanwhile denounced the violence in the capital the previous evening and claimed there was evidence it had been planned in advance.

On Sunday evening, Serbian Opposition demonstrators broke windows as they tried to storm into the Belgrade city hall. Mr. Vucic described the incidents as an attempted "forcible takeover of state institutions".

Early on Monday, Mr. Vucic met Russian Ambassador in Belgrade Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko and briefed him on the Sunday's incidents.

"The attempts of the collective West to destabilise the situation in the country are obvious," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

Pope calls for an end to the wars in Gaza, Ukraine as world celebrates Christmas

Agence France-Presse
VATICAN CITY

People donned Santa caps on beaches, ski slopes and streets around the globe on Monday to celebrate Christmas, as Pope Francis called for an end to the wars in Gaza and Ukraine that this year have cast a shadow over one of the world's favourite holidays.

Red and white Santa outfits appeared on surfers from Australia to Florida, on bicyclists in the smog-filled streets of New Delhi and intrepid souls braving chilly Channel waters for a holiday dip near Britain's Dover.

In his annual Christmas Day "Urbi and Orbi" mass at the Vatican, Pope Francis called for an end "to war, to every war, to the very mindset of war, an aimless voyage, a defeat without victors, an inexcusable folly".

May peace "come in Israel and Palestine, where war is devastating the lives of those peoples", he said.

"I reiterate my urgent appeal for the liberation of those still being held hostage. I plead for an end to the military operations with their appalling harvest of innocent civilian victims, and call for a solution to the desperate humanitarian situation by an opening to the provision of humanitarian aid", he said.

"I implore peace for Ukraine. Let us renew our spiritual and human closeness to its embattled people", he said, also calling for the resolution of conflicts simmering in West Asia, Africa and the Caucasus.

Israel's bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza, has killed more than 20,400 people, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Sport

Four fresh faces in Women in Blue's ODI squad for Australia series

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Shreyanka Patil, Mannat Kashyap, Saika Ishaque and Titas Sadhu were on Monday included for the first time in the Indian women's ODI squad for the upcoming limited-overs assignment against Australia.

India will play in three ODIs and as many T20Is against the visiting Australian team.

A crafty left-arm-spinner, the Patiala-born Mannat, 20, was earlier called up for the T20I series against England but did not get a game. Shreyanka earned her maiden ODI call-up after she made her debut in the T20I series against England.

Time to shine: Saika and Shreyanka will be eager to perform.
FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

Saika Ishaque was one of the top bowlers for Mumbai Indians in the inaugural Women's Premier League.

The schedule

The three-match ODI series will be played at the Wankhede Stadium and will start on December 28. The next two matches will be played on December 30 and January 2.

The action will then shift to DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai which will host the three T20Is on January 5, 7 and 9.

Harmanpreet Kaur remains the captain of both the teams with Smriti Mandhana being her deputy.

The squads:
ODIs: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana (Vice-capt.), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Mannat Kashyap, Saika Ishaque, Renuka Singh Thakur, Titas Sadhu, Pooja Vastrakar, Sneh Rana, and Harleen Deol.
T20Is: Harmanpreet Kaur (Capt.), Smriti Mandhana (Vice-capt.), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Yastika Bhatia (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Mannat Kashyap, Saika Ishaque, Renuka Singh Thakur, Titas Sadhu, Pooja Vastrakar, Kanika Ahuja, and Minnu Mani.

Australia unchanged for second Test; Pakistan drops veteran Sarfaraz

PAKISTAN IN AUS

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

Australia named an unchanged XI on Monday for the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground as it looks to seal the series against Pakistan, which dropped veteran wicket-keeper-batter Sarfaraz Ahmed.

The hosts crushed Shan Masood's side by 360 runs inside four days in the first Test in Perth, with pace spearheads Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood all coming through unscathed.

It means Scott Boland, who took six for seven on debut at the MCG against England in 2021, misses out.

All set: Pakistan's Imam will hope to come good. AFP

Showers and potential thunderstorms are expected for the first day of play but are forecast to clear by Wednesday afternoon and Cummins said he was confident of a result.

Pakistan has been hit hard by injuries since Perth with fast bowler Khurram Shahzad and the two leading spinners, Abrar Ahmed and Noman Ali, all ruled out of the Melbourne match. It named a 12-man squad with Sarfaraz Ahmed and speedster Faheem Ashraf axed. Mohammad Nawaz will take the gloves. With Sarfaraz and Noman sidelined, Sajid Khan is the only spin option.

The teams: Australia XI: Pat Cummins (Capt.), David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon and Josh Hazlewood.
Pakistan (from): Shan Masood (Capt.), Imam-ul-Haq, Abdullah Shafique, Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan, Agha Salman, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Hasan Ali, Mir Hamza, Aamer Jamal and Sajid Khan.

TOUGH LESSONS

We are trained to move on quickly from heartbreaks, says Dravid

PTI

India head coach Rahul Dravid said that the players have learnt to move on after heartbreaks like the one in the ODI World Cup final. "You don't really have time to remain down. You have to pick yourself up and move on, and the boys have done that really well," he said, adding that the spirit in the camp "has been superb".

ADAPT BETTER

We understand the advantage we have in home conditions: Bavuma

REUTERS

South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma expects his team to adapt to the conditions with rain forecast for the first day of the Test on Tuesday. "Being home conditions, we understand the advantage we have. You can expect us to adapt a lot better." Bavuma said he was also aware that playing India comes with its own set of challenges.

BIG BLOW

Shami will be a big miss for what he has done over the years: Rohit

PTI

India's World Cup hero Mohammed Shami has been ruled out of the South Africa Test series with an ankle injury and Rohit called the speedster's absence a big loss. "Shami will be a big miss for what he has done for us over the years. Someone will fill up (the) hole but it won't be easy," he said.

CONFIDENT

They will be fresh, they will be firing: Conrad on Rabada, Ngidi

PTI

South Africa's red-ball coach Shukri Conrad has downplayed the readiness of pacers Lungi Ngidi and Kagiso Rabada for the Test series against India. "They will be fresh, they will be firing. The ideal thing would have been to get some mileage in the legs in the four-day game, but injuries happen. I am not in the least bit concerned."

Rohit's men gear up for the South Africa challenge

India has the arsenal to script history and the onus is on the skipper and star batter Kohli to do the heavy-lifting; the hosts would look to protect their fortress; rain likely to play spoilsport

INDIA IN SA

P.K. Ajith Kumar
CENTURION

All about balance: With Rahul set to don the big gloves, India has an opportunity to field the experienced Ashwin as it bids for a series win that has proved elusive on South African soil. PTI

More than 500km away from the quiet, historical town of Centurion lies Pietermaritzburg. At the railway station there, Mahatma Gandhi was thrown out from a train's Whites-only compartment.

The incident changed Gandhi's life. It would change India's history, too.

Some 130 years later, a group of young men from India are hoping to create history in their own way - on the cricket field.

No Indian team has won a Test series in South Africa. It is the only major Test-playing nation where India has not been able to win a series in the longest format.

Rohit Sharma's men must be hoping to conquer that final frontier this time. To achieve that, they need a few things to go their way - including something they have little control over. Like the weather.

It looks like only a change of hearts from the rain gods could ensure a reasonable amount of - let alone full - day's play on the opening day of the first Test at the SuperSport Park on Tuesday.

An extremely wet Christmas it was for the people in this part of the world.

The forecast isn't very encouraging for Boxing Day, either. But there could be still enough time in the Test to get a decisive result, given the nature of the surface and the quality of bowling on either team.

India cannot afford to be on the wrong side of that result if it wants to rewrite history: this is a two-match series. The last time it played a Test match here, two years ago, it had scored a convincing victory, by 113 runs.

Many of the players from that winning side are missing from this squad, though, including Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane.

This is the first time in over a decade that India is playing an away Test without either one of the red-ball specialists.

Enough experience

But in Rohit and Virat Kohli, who averages an impressive 51.35 in Tests here, it has enough experience, and if the duo fires, India should have enough runs on the board to put the host under pressure.

It would be interesting to see how the young guns Yashasvi Jaiswal, who made a big hundred on Test debut in the West Indies, and Shubman Gill fare at the top of the order.

K.L. Rahul, who scored a splendid hundred as an opener here in 2021-22 and who has to don the keeping glove as well, and Shreyas Iyer may have vital roles to play in the middle order.

Mohammed Shami's absence is a big blow no doubt, but his fellow-seamers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj can cause plenty of damage.

Prasidh Krishna or Mukesh Kumar could get an opportunity to get into those big shoes of Shami.

As for South Africa, though there had been injury concerns about its quality quicks Kagiso Rabada and Lungi Ngidi, coach Shukri Conrad has indicated they are ready to fire.

He will be looking to the likes of opener Dean Elgar, who is retiring from international cricket with this series, captain Temba Bavuma and Aiden Markram, for runs - enough of those to prevent India from making history.

The teams (from):
South Africa: Temba Bavuma (Capt.), Dean Elgar, Aiden Markram, Tony de Zorzi, David Bedingham, Kyle Verreynne, Keegan Petersen, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Kagiso Rabada, and Tristan Stubbs.
India: Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Jasprit Bumrah (Vice-capt.), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, K.L. Rahul, R. Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Shardul Thakur, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Prasidh Krishna, and K.S. Bharat.
Match starts at 1.30 p.m. IST.

'We want to achieve what nobody has achieved here'

P.K. Ajith Kumar
CENTURION

Battle-ready: Rohit will be keen to let his bat do the talking. PTI

Rohit Sharma made it clear at the outset. "Only questions about the Indian team," he said at a media interaction at the team's hotel on Monday, even as the steady rain continued.

He, of course, didn't want to talk about the IPL and all the breaking news from the world's biggest league. Which was fair enough: after all, he has an excellent opportunity to become the first man who could India lead to victory in a Test series in South Africa, the final frontier. "We want to achieve what nobody has achieved in this part of the world," he said.

Rohit sounded keen to put behind the disappointment of the loss to Australia in the World Cup final, but admitted it took time to get out of that. "The way we played in the World Cup, until the final, you expect to go an inch further," he said. "Unfortunately, we couldn't do it and that was the hard part. Honestly, we have worked hard for it all these years and you saw how we managed to play the first 10 games. Obviously, it is hard to move on from a loss like that."

Looking back at the summit clash, he said, "We didn't do certain things well in the final and that cost us the match. There were not many things we could point out that we didn't do this right or we didn't do that right."

It was important to move on, he pointed out. "There is so much happening in life," he said.

"There's so much cricket happening. You've got to find that strength to move on from that. It took time for me as well to come out of that. But, you know, you have to look forward. And, honestly, we got a lot of encouragement from the outside world after that final. That motivated me personally to make sure I get up and start doing my job again."

Rohit was full of praise for K.L. Rahul's wicket-keeping skills. "The way he kept in the World Cup was quite pleasing," he said. "He is really working hard and is quite keen to take up the role. He got a hundred while opening the innings here last time. But this time, he will play in the middle-order and we have seen that he does most of the things right in that position in ODIs."

Asked where he saw himself as a batter in the next two years, he said, "I will play whatever cricket is there in front of me."

In the absence of Shami, India will have to play Prasidh Krishna or Mukesh Kumar. Rohit said a decision hadn't been taken yet. "It is a very tough call to pick between the two (Mukesh and Prasidh)," he said. "We have to see what the team needs and how the pitch behaves."

India has had its moments in the sun in SA, but searching for maiden Test series win

P.K. Ajith Kumar
CENTURION

South Africa has produced some of cricket's finest players and a team that brimmed with extraordinary talent. But that side, led by Ali Bacher and possessing gifted cricketers like Barry Richards, Graeme Pollock and Mike Procter, didn't get the opportunities it deserved as South Africa was banned by the ICC for the country's apartheid policy.

The Test that the team played in 1970, against Australia at Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), would be Proteas' last for more than two decades. And it was in 1992 that the South Africans could play in another Test at home.

The opponent was India, which had earlier played host on South Africa's return to international cricket with an ODI at Kolkata.

India has been touring the Rainbow Nation regularly after the historic tour of 1992-93. The first Test series was won by the host 1-0.

Amre sizzles on debut

The opening Test was drawn at Durban, a game in which Pravin Amre made a hundred on debut.

After the second Test at Johannesburg also produced a draw, South Africa won the third Test at Gqeberha, with speedster Allan Donald, nicknamed White Lightning, destroying India with a 12-wicket haul.

The fourth Test at Cape Town also ended in a draw.

The South Africans then went on to dominate India in Tests at home.

In 1996-97, they won the three-match Test series 2-0, with Donald once again proving the tormentor, claiming 20 wickets in the series.

Five years later, they won the series 1-0.

That series would be remembered for the Mike Denness incident; the match referee and former England captain found six Indian players – Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Sourav Ganguly, Deep Dasgupta, Harbhajan Singh and Shiv Sunder Das – guilty for offences like not informing the umpire before cleaning the ball and excessive appealing.

Not surprisingly, the second Test at Gqeberha created a storm.

India's future tours of South Africa were all much calmer affairs.

In 2006-07, the visitors scored their first ever Test win in South Africa, thanks to sensational spells of seam bowling by S. Sreesanth (five for 40 and three for 59). The tourists won by 123 runs at Johannesburg.

India has since won another three Tests in South Africa, in 2010-11, 2017-18 and 2021-22. Now, the aim of Rohit Sharma's men will be not just to win one more Test, but the series, something it has not achieved so far.

Unconquered territory

South Africa is the only country where India hasn't won a Test series so far. As Rohit's men chase history, a look at how the Indians have fared in the Rainbow Nation

INDIA-SOUTH AFRICA HEAD-TO-HEAD IN TESTS

Series record	M	INDIA	SOUTH AFRICA	Drawn
Overall	15	4	8	3
In South Africa	8	0	7	1

- **1992-93:** SA won 1-0 (4 Matches)
- **1996-97:** SA won 2-0 (3 Matches)
- **2001-02:** SA won 1-0 (2 Matches)
- **2006-07:** SA won 2-1 (3 Matches)
- **2010-11:** Drawn 1-1 (3 Matches)
- **2013-14:** SA won 1-0 (2 Matches)
- **2017-18:** SA won 2-1 (3 Matches)
- **2021-22:** SA won 2-1 (3 Matches)

THE SCHEDULE
- **December 26-30:** Centurion
- **January 3-7:** Cape Town

Both Tests start at 1.30 p.m. IST

MATCH RECORD

	M	INDIA	SOUTH AFRICA	Drawn
Overall	42	15	17	10
In South Africa	23	4	12	7

INDIA VICTORIOUS
- **2006:** Won by 123 runs, Johannesburg
- **2010:** Won by 87 runs, Durban
- **2018:** Won by 63 runs, Johannesburg
- **2021:** Won by 113 runs, Centurion

COMPILED BY: **TARUN SHASTRY**
SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

India's first Test win in South Africa came in 2006-07, thanks to Sreesanth's sensational bowling The team has also won three more games (2010-11, 2017-18, 2021-22)

INBRIEF

Gujarat Giants quells Rajasthan Warriors' challenge

Gujarat Giants defeated Rajasthan Warriors 41-30 in its first match of Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Cuttack on Monday. P. Narasayya contributed to Giants' win with eight points while Sanket Kadam and Suyash Gargate notched up six each. Shubham Thorat, Abhinandan Patil and Akshay Bhangare defended brilliantly for 6.53 minutes to earn bonus points for Giants.

Naveen shines as Dabang best Warriors in PKL

Naveen Kumar produced a masterclass as Dabang Delhi K.C. recorded a 38-29 victory over Bengal Warriors in Chennai on Monday. The Delhi Captain scored 11 raid points and also surpassed 1000 raid points in the Pro Kabaddi League.

LIVE TELECAST

NBA: Sports 18-1 & Jio Cinema App, 6.30 & 9 a.m.

South Africa vs India: 1st Test, day 1, Star Sports 1 & Hotstar, 1.30 p.m.

Premier League: SS Select 1, 2 & Hotstar, 6, 8.30, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

Ultimate Kho-Kho: Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 7 & 8.30 p.m.

ISL: Sports 18-1 & Jio Cinema App, 8 p.m.

PKL: Star Sports 2 & Hotstar, 8 p.m.

Australia vs Pakistan: 2nd Test, day 2, Star Sports 1 & Hotstar, 5 a.m. (Wednesday)

Impressive Jaismine fine-tuning her skills

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist working on her punches and mental acuity targetting the Paris Olympics quota

Looking ahead: Jaismine is excited about the future and is confident that her efforts would yield results. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

BOXING

Press Trust of India
GREATER NOIDA

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist boxer Jaismine Lamboria is working on increasing her mental acuity as well as sharpening her punches as she eyes a coveted Paris Olympic quota.

The talented boxer ended her debut Asian Games campaign on an anti-climactic note earlier this year. Having won the first round in dominant fashion, Jaismine seemingly had a brain fade moment after she was given a warning, with referee eventually forced to stop the 60kg quarterfinal bout.

"After that Asian Games bout, coaches told me to work on the mental aspect. I am working with a psychologist. He has told me to work on visualisation and do meditation," she added.

The 22-year-old cruised to the National Championships semifinal in the 60kg category, which is one of the two women's weight classes where India is yet to seal a quota.

A top-three finish at the Nationals will ensure a return to the national camp for Jaismine, where she has been a regular for the past two years. Jaismine has come a long way since competing in her debut World Championships in 2022.

"There has been progress, I try and work on my weaknesses. My game is getting better with time. *Par ek dum se nahi aa raha, time lag raha hai* (I am not able to win medals, it's taking time)," rued Jaismine.

"*Mera quarterfinal mei reh jata hai* (I end up losing in the quarterfinals)," she added, having lost in the last-eight stage both in the World Championships and Asian Games.

Last year, Jaismine had become the first woman boxer to be inducted into the Indian Army. At the Services camp, she trains and spars with male boxers to increase the power of her punches.

"I train with the boys during the Services camp. It improves my game and strength. There are only three girls in the camp, so coaches pay a lot of attention to what we should do and should not do."

"Dimitry (Dmitruk) sir and Bernard (Dunne) sir also tell me to connect punches and go ahead and attack. At the same time, be ready for counter attack," she added.

Manju, Sakshi storm into quarterfinal

ANI
GREATER NOIDA

The 2019 World Championship silver medalist Manju Rani (48kg) and two-time youth world champion Sakshi (57kg) maintained their impressive form by advancing to the quarterfinals on day four of the 7th Elite Women's National Boxing Championships at the GBU Indoor Stadium here on Monday.

Representing the Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB), Manju Rani showcased her experience and skills against Guddi of Chandigarh as she secured a 5-0 victory. The pugilist will face Sanjana of Delhi in the next round.

In another match-up, Sakshi of SSCB beat Telangana's Refa Mohid in a round-of-16 bout.Sakshi will go head-to-head against Aarti Mehra of Chandigarh in the quarterfinals.

Unanimous decision

The 2022 Senior National champion Shashi Chopra (63kg) secured the victory with a unanimous decision against Aarti Dariyal of Uttarakhand and advanced. Shashi will face Sonu of All India Police next.

Meanwhile, in the 66kg match, Ankushita Boro beat Mizoram's Vanlalhriatpuii 5-0. She will face Anjali Tushir of RSPB in the quarterfinals.

Ratcliffe wants United on top of European football

Associated Press
MANCHESTER

British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe has finally got his hands on Manchester United after securing a stake of up to 25% in the Premier League club.

The 71-year-old owner of petrochemicals giant has been a United fan since childhood, and supporters will like his stated ambitions. "We all want to see Manchester United back where we belong, at the very top of English, European and world football," Ratcliffe said on Sunday after the deal, subject to Premier League approval, was confirmed.

Mireya clinches Wanaparthy Cup

HYDERABAD: Trainer G. Sandeep's mare Mireya, ridden by apprentice Ajay Kumar, won the Wanaparthy Cup, the main event of Monday's (Dec. 25) races. The winner is owned by Mr. Subodh Kumar Ananthula.

THE RESULTS:

1. KUNTALA PLATE: D YES BOSS (A. Ashad Asbar) 1, Bold Beauty (N.B. Kuldeep) 2, Sucker Punch (G. Naresh) 3 and Master Touch (A. Imran Khan) 4. Not run: Samrat. 4-1/2, 1 and 1-1/4. 1m 25.75s. ₹49 (w), 10, 15 and 48 (p). SHP: 35, THP: 67, SHW: 20 and 14, FP: 265, Q: 91, Tanala: 2,732. Favourite: Miracle Mary.

Owners: Mr. Sriram Uppaluri, Mr. Srinivas Rao Mogili & Mr. Ravi Teja Addepalli. Trainer: Ananta Vatsalya.

2. ARISTOCRAT PLATE (Div. I): **SANGREAL** (Santosh Raj N.R.) 1, Silver Act (Ajay Kumar) 2, Ok Boss (N.B. Kuldeep) 3 and Pontefract (Mukesh Kumar) 4. 3/4, Nose and 1/2. 1m 5. 42s. ₹58 (w), 10, 12 and 20 (p). SHP: 45, THP: 33, SHW: 27 and 17, FP: 263, Q: 117, Tanala: 686. Favourite: Silver Act.

Owners: United Racing & Bloodstock Breeders Limited & Mr. Sanjay R. Goyani. Trainer: K.S.V. Prasad Raju.

3. TRADE FAIR PLATE: THE THUNDER (A. Ashad Asbar) 1, Cabello (Ajay Kumar) 2, Bangor On Dee (Md. Ekram Alam) 3 and Tripurari (P. Ajeeth Kumar) 4. Neck, 2-1/2 and 1/2. 1m 10. 55s. ₹87 (w), 22, 25 and 10 (p). SHP: 65, THP: 38, SHW: 30 and 35, FP: 917, Q:P 328, Tanala: 2,844. Favourite: Bangor On Dee.

Owner: Mr. B.E. Vasanth Kumar. Trainer: B. Mukesh Kumar.

4. ARISTOCRAT PLATE (Div. II): **CALISTA GIRL** (Shivansh) 1, Cosmico (Md. Ismail) 2, Shadow Fax (Ajay Kumar) 3 and Subha (Afroz Khan) 4. 2-3/4, 1/2 and Neck. 1m 5. 12s. ₹22 (w), 13, 18 and 12 (p). SHP: 49, THP: 34, SHW: 10 and 51, FP: 138, Q: 69, Tanala: 372. Favourite: Calista Girl.

Owners: Kunwar Digvijay Singh Shekhawat, Mr. N. Shyam Sunder & Mr. Sreeramulu Bommishetty. Trainer: B. Mukesh Kumar.

5. HUSSAIN SAGAR CUP: ALPINE GIRL (Kuldeep Singh (Jr)) 1, Voice Of A Dream (P. Ajeeth Kumar) 2, Caraxes (Afroz Khan) 3 and Aerial Combat (Md. Ekram Alam) 4. 5, Neck and 3-1/2. 2m 3. 61s. ₹50 (w), 14, 11 and 19 (p). SHP: 32, THP: 34, SHW: 26 and 27, FP: 237, Q: 189, Tanala: 1,527. Favourite: Hero Of The East.

Owner: Mr. Deepak Choudhary. Trainer: Jasbir Singh.

6. WANAPARTHY CUP: MIREYA (Ajay Kumar) 1, Sun Dancer (Afroz Khan) 2, Its On (Mukesh Kumar) 3 and Fly Tothe Stars (Md. Ismail) 4. Neck, Neck and 1/2. 1m 24. 23s. ₹21 (w), 24, 16 and 34 (p). SHP: 53, THP: 128, SHW: 23 and 26, FP: 97, Q: 61, Tanala: 325. Favourite: Mireya.

Owner: Mr. Subodh Kumar Ananthula. Trainer: G. Sandeep.

7. ARISTOCRAT PLATE (Div. III): **PRECIOUS GIFT** (Ajay Kumar) 1, Saint Emilion (Shivansh) 2, Ambitious Star (Md. Ekram Alam) 3 and Exponent (R.S. Jodha) 4. Neck, 2 and Shd. 1m 5. 93s. ₹70 (w), 23, 15 and 28 (p). SHP: 29, THP: 44, SHW: 15 and 25, FP: 659, Q: 235, Tanala: 1,873. Favourite: Hard To Toss.

Owners: M/s. Teegala Vijender Reddy, Teegala Sumant & Ashok Ranpise. Trainer: K.S.V. Prasad Raju.

Jackpot: 70%: ₹39,802 (7 tkts.); 30%: 2,132 (56 tkts.).

Mini Jackpot: (i) 12,057 (4 tkts.), (ii) 4,655 (19 tkts.).

Treble: (i) 1,881 (12 tkts.), (ii) 1,559 (26 tkts.).

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